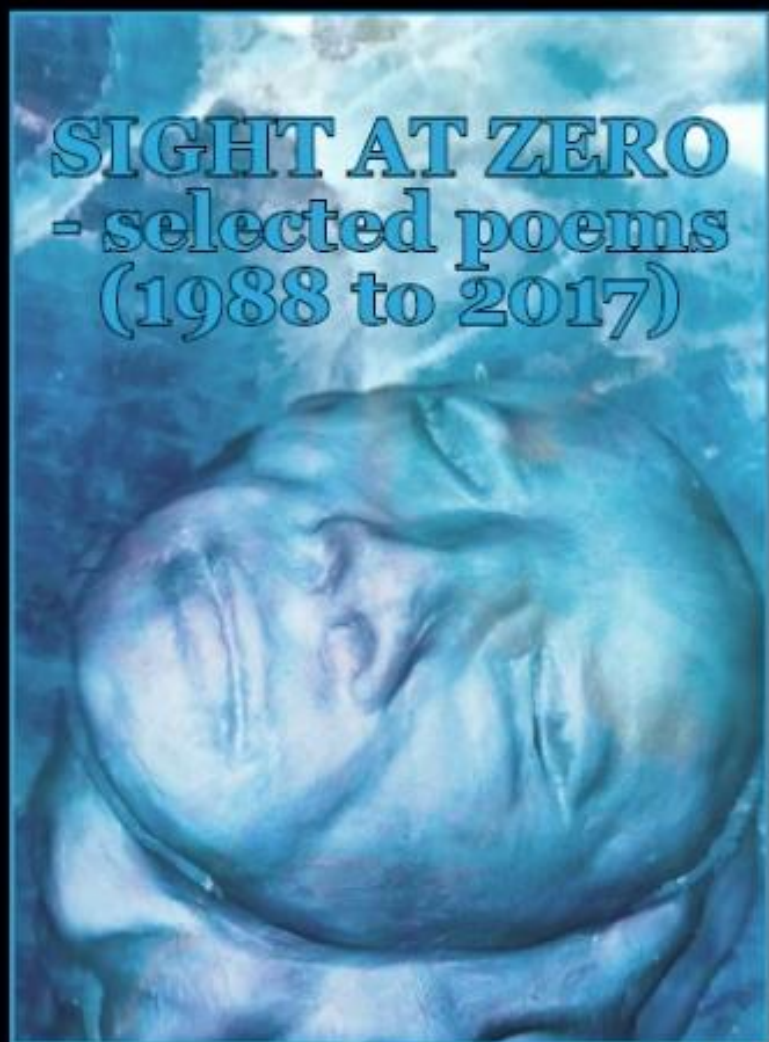


SIGHT AT ZERO
- selected poems
(1988 to 2017)



.....●.....
Allison Grayhurst

Sight at Zero

– selected poems (1988 to 2017)

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

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Altered Behind City Gardens

Twilight

There is a beat in the darkening air
that whispers of love and laughter

There is song in the rippling wind
so moving
so unmeasured
that even dreams
cannot meet its glory

There is colour
There is more than power
in one stroke
in one fallen ray
that gives rhythm
to a discordant day

They say
Night comes
like death comes
 eventually

But there,
Oh there! The first star . . .

I Will Run

I will go now
into the constellations
like into a field of marigolds.
I will run now like a drunkard
at dawn. The waves
of morning's early light
will be my medicine – the blue
& purple & orange thin arches,
all aglowing.

I will funnel my way out
of this personal war. I will
carry wounds & swords
in my arms. I will throw
them to the sky until
they fall like rainstorm,
leaving no trace after a
a day of sun.

You will not find me
walled behind my face,
or hunt me beneath
the garden cellar.

The nothing-air
will steal my name
& tomorrow I will
slip between the rocks.

On Tour

Pale as the Eastern gulls sitting on rooftops,

he speeds over the wide country.

He hurts with uncommon intensity -
liberation balanced between his two lips.

Like the slow hum of rain, I hear him
treading the snowed-in cities, hear his kiss
like a prayer of protection, flowering.

Freedom stitched to his smile,
he crosses the sea he's never seen before,
as he carries his guitar
like a lover's warm hand.

Welcome The Death

Welcome the death
of holding death
like a smile. For all
that dreams within,
all that spreads uncorrupted
through the veins, turns its back
on oblivion, knows faith, knows
its destination is beneath the
stars.

Welcome the changing leaves, the
frosted flowers, the vanity of being,
of feeling one Self, whole before
the world.

Welcome the body, the counted pennies,
the child's plight and faces lost
in midnight light, eternally forgotten.

Welcome the one who stands, the one who
praises every cried-out syllable, purges
the soul of stagnant battles, hour upon hour
smells the freshness of renewal in clenched fists
and phones that never ring.

Welcome the sound of a remembered kiss
and the ghosts that grieve forever
beside each mortal heart.

When The City Speaks

It is no small place
this devil's field
where leopard's blood
runs through the streets
like a constellation
cut from the sky.
Drunkards, drug pushers,
the cold amoebas that
die without seeing a dawn.
In Chinatown, the spell is
set loose, splitting
sidewalks with fury.
Waxen murderers, a barnyard
of devourers.
Inside,
lovers tremble,
clutched tight together,
sensual and desperate,
anaesthetized by passion,
by common fear
of the cruel madness
that pounds and pursues
just outside their door,
where all
will never be
well nor
free.

Wax Museum

God is your hobby:
My mouth inhales,
flushes you in.
Going to the wax museum to visit your sleeping body;
tonight with effort, tomorrow, with regret.
It is the end of a miracle, nevertheless,
I won't forget the sirens, your steel throat
rusted with alcoholic burns
or the hooves and the poison,
how you tempted me to the maximum degree.
There is a sunset I am cupping in my hands,
it is turning dark blue like the colour
we both love
and I am staring into it like a poet mesmerized by the sea.
Farewell my pirate friend –
Live good,
conquer the pitiful sky in your dreams.
Every barrier is a mountain
challenging your devotion,
torturing your nights with its magnificent summit.
I drink like a root from the underground: I am not upset
though shadows are cleaving, swarming my soul.
I am only running,
and it's a long way to paradise
even when you hurry.

Watchman Of The Night

From the horizon
he emerges
winged man
sapphire eyes
savagely unfurling his bright feathers

He cups the salt from the sea
takes it to his mouth as nourishment –
pellets to spew at the sky

Then up!
twisting with the wind
dancing in the aura of the setting sun

His silver hair
flares the sky
his midnight lips
lost in haunting song

Chariots, tigers
race, prowl
around his blue body

Swirling, he meets the moon
and takes his place among the stars.

Wingbeats

I could tell you
never close your eyes
it is us
and us only
who carry the iron
and dismiss ourselves from the cross
Where is home?
Can you answer me
in this month of sensuous summer?
When we love
is it enough
to entice the dead from their settled sleep?
I once heard the sound of pain
in an old man's voice
It was real
the magic of song
milk from a mother's swollen breast
the authentic desire
for union
Every vineyard
has its legend
Every someone
wanders protected and important
in this long age of insanity
Nearly all dancers
have hesitated,
felt their passions, suspicious
unnatural impulses
depleting their strength
But so –
heaven is not a womb
nor a winter's twilight
intense but brief

**I once saw a golden eagle
repeat its wingbeats
alone in the breeze
flapping
as if to say:
I know myself
completely.**

Desire

does not come
like tolerance, learned,
worked for. Withstanding
cruelty, dry lips,
wild pain, it grows larger
than love and God and grows
until all gestures reveal it.

Secretly in the shade of devotion,
it rages. Crouching behind churches and
stairwells, it tongues its drug sweeter
than touch. Burns the stomach, starves
the heart of faithful riches.

When it comes it has no error
nor the unanchored presence
of doubt.

When it comes, it comes riding,
circling like nightfall
the soul's great yolk.

Because of course

you will go with summer
never knowing a remedy.
You will go beyond where you go
around the ninth and final life, ducking
in dark boxes to fade finally alone,
away from instinct and nurturing.
You will go into the natural earth,
and from there, my vision staggers and
cannot name, but caught
on the wind, in sensual shades
of forgiveness mighty & forever,
you will know a place unhindered by death.
You will hear the secret
your pale eyes
have always harboured.

Mortal Love

Now that I am not alone
and the dream I dreamt
with the most desire
is discovered . . .

Now with Him, safe from
spiritual seeking because
I found Him and more mystery
than music brings, found what
only could be given beyond
the turning of the wheel . . .

Found my lover singing
his unriddled truths. Found
my lover more tender than
the heart's soft skin.

Now that we three
rise and walk as one, passion
and peace join and swell, and
even the senseless theft
of nightfall is forgiven.

Dostoevsky

Demon of everglade beauty
of the dark space around the
moon.

Sensitive to the point of sickness.

Deep-set eyes like the eyes
of some brooding god,
hammering

the earth to pieces.

Breath of an invalid, gambler
& saint, weighed down by
sentiment.

Breath of grey and yellow
skies above you, blood red
buried beneath bone and
skin.

Hand of a writer,
naked without a pen,
like a new-born bird
flung

from its nest: flesh on fire.

Apocalypse mind, opener
of the seventh seal. Mentor of all
believers.

Christ-like visions swarm your mind.

Ravaged by depression,
by high ideals that
rip

out your ribs, one by one
into the thick day.

Days Without Water

My arms grow weary
under the wheel
Skulls in my pockets
and a mountain up ahead
with flesh and jaw bone
extended

I search for his airborne heart
in the crevices of clouds

I search for his pure
brave gaze in the way
birds with wing graze
the edge of each rainbow, anew

I walk into autumn's
darkening rays, lonely
as the architecture of church walls,
lonely as the light
in the half-closed eyes
of children

I think again of his thin fingers
exhaling tenderness in every blind curve touch

He is milk & wind
He is nowhere
to be found

First Snow of Winter

First snow of winter falling.

The bed is unmade.
Rooftops are beautiful
and white.

Home is a birthday cake,
a painting etched in crimson
light. The cats are intently watching.
The sounds outside are few. One lover
is sleeping, the other breathes in
the wintry view.

Like a cleansing, like an unmarked page
or a slice of Italian bread,
the snows descend, bringing warmth
to the veins, bringing the comfort
of sweaters and knitted socks, bringing
bodies together and the year to an end.

First snow of winter falling
like another chance, like a farewell
to colours fading and flowers on the graves.

First snow of winter arriving,
its tide of working magic
caressing away the rage of the city
with its cold, immaculate embrace.

Bless The Fallen

**Bless the fallen, the less than ghost faces
that haunt this cityscape.**

**Bless the one who cannot give, who cannot
nurse a broken heart.**

**Bless the one hardened by degrees, by small failures
that mount a life incapable.**

**Bless the proud bearer of truth who cannot be humbled,
blinded by spiritual vanity.**

**Bless the arrogant, the one who feels movement
only by force.**

**Bless the bearer of bitterness, who has no stronghold
but hate.**

**Bless the one who fails to see the birds fly, hear
the angels in their dreams.**

**Forgive us our canyons where self-pity reigns
and self-pity devours.**

**Hold us near the harbour light though the chaos of sea
be the only realm
we, as of yet, have known.**

Country Ride

Long fingers like ribs
stroke the sky in mortal shades.

Time, watching trees
planted in fields,
so alone and tied
to all eternity.

Time, seeing the liquid
eyes of cows, and horses
without a tribe, drifting
from grass strand to strand.

And again, the treetops like
sackcloths of autumn orange and red,
take all attention
from the barns.

Dogs in the distance run
feverish
and free.

Adrift

Stripped of temper
and the tossing blue.
The sky weighs on me like a globe.
Beginning in the curve of my tongue, I hide
my sorrow like an eel.
I dive past daybreak
into the ditch of midnight.
Guilt is my patched umbrella.
I am only a few feet from home -
a penny in my pocket, a chain
I cannot lose. I want to learn
of pastures where the dying are saved
by prayer, where each captive beast
is released and love is not compared.
Reptiles in the morning clouds.
A snake around a leaf.
I hope to build a boat for patience.
Clinging to a fragment of a tree
I count each schoolless fish,
and tilt against the tide.

Thieves Of Muse

I hope my star does not
shift from Earth and sight,
into galaxies unbridled by
God. And that my vision has
hair and pulse, enough
to reach the primal light, grow
a new strength with each
passing defeat.

*In hours of climbing the worn pillars of love, as death
forces on through sleep, futility & tears, and climbing,
climbing to no avail, to see no sun, feel only the cold
shattering of heartbreak and the mind undoing . . .*

If You Wait...

**When the man comes
he will be wearing rings of endless
symbol. He will be like a wave,
strong, flexible, seeking shore.
You will know him by his smell
and the way his voice sounds in the rain.
He will lie beside you like a childhood friend,
abandoned to breath and peace
beyond measure.
Rich with depth and kindness,
he will cradle your head on his chest
and you will bless the wound that almost
killed, then brought you near
his golden blood.**

To Walk Without Shape or Sound

That I cling to this cold sleep,
show little effort to be removed . . .
In nightmares of symbols grey and mortal,
fears translate all my hope
into an impatient temper, and I stand,
arms folded, with threatening glances
turned toward the window.
That I will not move from this unhappy
bondage, give the world the wave it deserves and
rejoice, full force in my non-belonging . . .
That I lay with false sorrow, my numbing wounds
displayed like so many movies, consuming
all thought and vision . . .
Drowning in unutterable loneliness, I
cannot pray this bad taste off my tongue,
cannot claim my home inside the lightning jaws.
I have seen the light abandoned for the hangnail's
torment. I have seen this darkness, dug my head deep
in its flaming mud.

But this is nowhere:

There is only
the circle, the spiral journey
up
only to be like the animals and angels,
uncommitted
to the weather's foothold.

For Every Rain

For every day of sleep
let me shoulder the rain.

For every autumn flower
let me pass through the
shadows well.

Who waters the eagle's nest?
How many voices cry out
in the attic up high?

Angels,
animals hailing the rising
sun. Laughter in the eyes
of children.

Go deep,
go generous past the
crossroads, through the
lonely world.

There are heartless fools
drumming to break every
good faith, and rainbows
there to drown all tears
in howling
colour.

Seeking the Balanced Degree

My mind is painted bright blue
like a pair of favourite jeans.
My belly is bread for thieves. Here
the crime awakens:
I drink from the eternal teat
of responsibility, from the lake
of suffering I must ignore
to breathe a steady rain, to scatter
my guilt amongst the weeds.
What happens when your all is nothing?
or when the truck runs you down seeing only
anonymous hairstrands and entrails?
Knowing love's limitations,
like one knows the snows or the teeth
of an animal, is the tension that frees.
An enemy is at my table.
A horse is buried under American sands.
My heart is water:
It longs to quench the hot summer skin of sparrows.

Crow

I followed the herd
into the abyss. I drank venom
from the eucalyptus
trees. I rushed against you:
My flag was waving.
The next day I left you,
abandoned. Shot like a beam
into the dark cave night. You followed,
coaxed like a crow
who beckons, black and beautifully:
I gave myself up without a word.
You wore my skin, laughed freely
at my thirst.
So easy now . . .
I am consumed and in
a dream. Love is falling
like apples.

Somewhere Falling

Take the blueness of daybreak. Laugh,
unbothered by the lucent
 shadows. Today I slept,
mawkishly normal, mild
behind the mirror. Already, I can feel
 the horizon issue forth
its brazen beauty... entering the
dusk of a new tomorrow. Disguising myself
 the same as yesterday, I resurrect
my war – caged in plastic garments.
You are right, we travel in circles,
 swallowed by the movements that affirm
our preconceptions. Are these dreams?
My breath sails between air-tight
 walls. I eat lemon-drops
by the moon, honoring my thirst
for solitude. Behind the wheel,
 the years dance
elusive before me, giving shape to
my soul. Turning, trespassing
the boundaries of time
& sea, I wash my face in the wind
 Transfigured.

When Air-borne Beings Fall

As though my heart
was sand, absorbing
the dive of crows.

In the deep,
in the still deep ground
of dust & ruins, wings
fall like smashed shells
expanding into
the flowing air.

I would give my capsized house,
my bed, my favourite corner
just to feel the rise of their quickening tides
clap over my bones & spirit. To know the fury
of feathers skillfully slicing
the skin of clouds. I would say this
is worth my enemy's claw, worth a mouth
full of laughter. I could speak again
of love without weight, of a saffron flower
exposing all to the sun.

I could take pictures in the garden.

Sight at Zero

I am where fireflies dance
in a birdless noon.

I am treading water, looking
for a lodged piece of land
or even a dolphin's fin
to navigate me through this
wounded sea. The air
is smoking & a world
away lovers assassinate love
for the sensation of pride.

Rain, drumming onto my neck, onto
my jugular, rain spewed from
the moon's mouth, enters & dissects
worse than any broken fame. Too late
to cross the inner clouds. Too long lost
in the wood under a weird & angry sun.

It is my jealousy
that has woken, generous
with hate. It is agony & frailty
like an eggshell hammered
by a razor's sharp tongue.

I see dragons rise
from sand dunes. I hear
the laughter of a bride. My days are closed.
My element (*water, hymn, water*)
abandoned
for wishbones.

Sheaves of Time

Sheaves of time like wispy hair
freed to the wind, fall on me,
tickling my skin with their subtle happening.
Happy are the people with soap opera love
and yellow hair.

Happy am I rolling and stretching & rolling
under the great white sun. I am moved
to deliver my package at noon. I am myself bonded
to my mission like ligaments to the bone.

Sheaves of time drift on my plate
like leaves from my favourite tree.

Call me out from my doubt and let me
love each day as new, with the kind of hope
only children hold, or lovers caressing faces,
feeling eternity on their fingertips.

Green Haven and You

I dream this early morning of
you, trading
all you own for love.
Birds walk on water, cooing the river
still. Two bones
lie buried beside the bank,
grey with decay, anonymous
as each fallen red-vein leaf.

I walk to your favourite rock,
still cold from night. There are
ten stars in the sky
visible as ten snowy owls
undone by dawn.

I dream of you across the vaulted miles.
You live inside my forming smile and in
the colours flooding the horizon, in
the almost-zenith sun,
advancing.

When Small Things Die

This is the guilt of being,
the empty horror,
the fearsome weight
of living conscious,
awake to the dull and lingering
ghosts. In my hands,
a small death, a mild cry,
a feeble resurrection.

This, the detached cycle,
the rotating climb
that no feeding heart grows used to.
Infant soul, infant eyes gazing
into my own. Body wriggling under
my warm fingers.

This is my love
expanding, my love too limited
to hold the healing needed, or shut off
the crude struggle of a gasping life. Life
thin-boned and motherless.
Cold paws, blue tongue,
neck, a loose ladder holding such a heavy,
awe-inspiring head,
slips
down into final slumber:

looking now
like a child's prized toy.

Altered Behind City Gardens

We walked behind city gardens.
He was singing
and riding
his hunger like a spear
through brightened houses and
cameo clouds.

He was saying to me - keep gold
and wild - as he lifted
a finger, pointing
above the ribs,
between my breasts.

How that day I became
his, as though gone into
his light and into his terror -
endless.

How that day I felt
a new blade of grass
beneath my rugged ware,
with every step,
found my country whole.

To Wait Without Drowning

Too quiet here
in the yellow rains, the yellow
darkness
ranting outside the door.

The wig of the sky
swells like a million balloons;
clouds,
foaming through the cracks of eternal space.

I want to say one thing
swift enough to catch
birds.

I want to say this thing

that contains shelter and the squawking storms,
that floods my body as though my skin
was a sponge, floods first,
then severs each nerve and cord.

I want to lie under water until I awaken,
until hunters and herds walk the grasslands,
calm
against each other's shoulders . . .

The Stone-Frame

The stone-frame sings
my threshold, sings my
heart's futility. It is
so hard a cage it makes
my knuckles crack, it breaks
my bones from too much leaping.
The stone-frame wishes to be my womb, but
could never be a comforting hovel,
or resting ground away from
world-wind and flame.
The stone-frame maims my voice
from protesting, strikes a match
to my endurance and holds me in
its damp, dusty dorm.
The stone-frame lets me dream of miles
away from its door, but never lets more
than my imagination go wandering.
The stone-frame is my perception trapped
in faithless monotony, is my coward smile
that fears the chaos outside
its grey, unchanging walls.

You Are

You are simple
like death is simple,
like death is unmistakable,
containing the most feverish and trying
of mysteries within
its boundless domain.
You are beautiful
like a cat is beautiful
silently sitting,
galactic in its sensual form,
giving with its gaze
substance to voice and blood.
You are fire-driven
like stars and like sex,
in perpetual combustion,
with an inner pulse of endless
dance, dancing
in savage, mystical tides.
You are gentle
like a raindrop caught
in a lucky palm, gentle
like the shelter of a best friend's arms.
You are more than sun and bird and fox,
more than soil to my groundless heart.
All I bless and all I need,
I hold because of you.
No meaning nor madness
could replace the milk and breath
that you are.

Animal Sanctuary

He turns his hawk head
to view the shells of turtles streaking
the still-shroud of water in tanks
as blue as sky.

He lifts a leg and talons tensed,
pivots to defend against an enclosing shadow.

With whitish eyes and an impossible urge
to fly, he hops along his man-made perch toward
the cages where squirrels leap
from metal to wood, scattering like leaves
in unpredictable flurry.

He listens to the ducks' lipless sounds.

Spring, he will never experience again, nor know
the scent of a pent-up life released like
sunflowers blooming, or the feel of the moon,
colder but more comforting than being touched.

He is without time or tribe,
and like fire, he haunts
by just being.

Beyond Instinct or Dreams

elegy of this day being

At the throat, brushed green like tile I shine.
The devil says "hum-drum"
as the eel struggles, futile like a wagging tail.
So many broken, hating with the hardness of crocodiles
and ants, pulling along their dead,
to consume, knowing nothing of sorrow or forgiveness.
All night I sit with my naked thighs
on the carpet, red from the heat.
What point could there possibly be
to all this pain, the death
of others, the sickness that swarms in mid-air?
Hurricanes hit the graveyards.
A gull tilts on a telephone wire. I wish to bid goodbye.
I wish for ice-cream cones in my fridge,
a handful of poppies to give some child,
any child, I meet.
I see dead eyes in my dream,
glossed with mucous and unbearable vacancy.
How do I serve when the world is so cold?
The humpbacks know this, the midgets
and also the centipedes.
I want to hide in rooms where
infants are sleeping or salamanders nurse their young.
The darkness is in me. The ground deceives me,
changes colours as I go.
Let us go now, my nightmares
and I, go under the light, go until
our heart's blood is free-falling, exposed.

Of Body and Spirit

I seek your mouth
of sensual burning,
its sponge-soft pressure
merging perfectly with mine.

I seek its subtle textures,
its waxing and waning, the way
it condenses my being into
its single substance, into
a movement of focused bloom.

I seek your hair, your blessed smell,
your hip bone rocking like
the whole of the sea over uncharted sands.

I seek your voice sweeping the air
with its rich unconscious moan.

I seek the taking of your hand,
the tension of our bodies balanced
in mutual, animal awakening.

A Day For My Own

The darning of socks in
summertime. The filing of nails
on a nothing-to-do night -
with all desires nourished.
I see a can of peaches open, the laundry washed
and windows everywhere, letting in
the outdoors.
I feel my pulse calm,
feel almond shells around my feet
and the fires of anxiety appeased.
Like holding the hand of a friend in need
or running through a valley with a dog
who can't be seen, my eyes are strong
with imagination. They blend
with the October leaves and lap-up
visions of children playing
where willow trees so easily grow.

Once

alone
where the deep star
failed to glow
I saw your heart come crawling
out of its obsessive shell,
crawl to where all shapes sing
of passion and mercy
side by side.

I saw your hard seed grow kind,
losing none of its brutal drive, but
gaining a natural beginning - grow in a soil of sensual
joy and a wild aching desire to be more
than nerves and need.

I saw your hands like waves arriving
to the final surrender of shore.

I saw you as stone, draped
in the mysteries of primal truths -
your head bowed in gentle fury, a figure
of unwavering embrace.

Of The Same Cloth

A perfect balance
of mystery and understanding
we contain in our
fiery hour.

Like a gull
against the sky, we merge under
the thick thighs of God.

You enter me like water
enters earth and I am within
you like a fish inside a wave.

Wave of your exotic beauty,
always capturing me, new to me, a taste
of perfect fulfilment. You bare the teeth
of a stranger, a hand of delicate,
tireless motion and I sink in the snows
of your spell, chilled by your intensity, by
the beautiful form of a man beside me.

You give to me the gallery of your secrets
as I give to you the skin of my defence.

We are the lucky one:

 marigolds and cathedral stones
line our weathered pockets.

Surrender

I yielded to touch, to
the coldness of my skeletal hopes.

I yielded toward a winding stairway
that led to where footprints travelled
through vines, through treeless grounds,
through oceans of lethal predators. I watched
as I was caught by fangs, watched
my each limb shred through teeth of earthly origin,
and soon no feeling, not even fear, remained.

The last of my blood was drained,
and once again I turned into a pale
and will-less thing like before I was given
body or breath.

Then by fingers made of fire, my paleness
was carved, foaming out of the cyclops eye of God,
forming nerves and nostrils - a new and
waking lid.

Everything Happens

Everything happens
meaning nothing, fashioned by lack
and political flags.
Who will stand the light,
a suicidal winter,
the awakened ghost under the bed?
Criminals build their heaven and
sinners are so beautiful, are us
in the full of our hypocrisy, our striving, lazy wills.
Joy. I know I could blossom
if only threatened by the cliff's edge -
held hanging by God's fingers
like an insect without wings.

Everything happens
like sleep eventually does.
I am lost. Too preoccupied with snails and moss.
But blessed be the hunger
and the saltiness of others.
Blessed be the essential, inseparable rib,
the quenching of all our boredom.

Walk Low

**Walk low in case I forget
the roots of my deliverance.**

**Walk low so my head knows it is human,
and my heart touches daily the earth I will
return to.**

Walk low in days of joy, in hours of toil.

**Walk low when leaping over burning fields,
into a relentless hunger.**

**Walk low on the land and café corners,
kindled by the sun's yellow grain.**

**Walk low, remembering how I turned from
another's need, held a dead starling
with eyes unable to weep, and thought
myself good for getting through.**

**Red wagon on its side. Red dream filling my
mouth like fire.**

**Walk low for whatever in me that is true,
was given by and belongs
to only you.**

Beyond Instinct or Dreams

Renewal is in the night,
comes like lovemaking
to heal the bruise of harsh words
and lonely needs.

Because a cigarette is sometimes
all that is wanted, or good news in the mail,
and because the ways of the heart are erratic,
inconsistently falling as flakes of snow,
that is why we sometimes sleep with death
as we do with God, not holding but letting It hold
us in a warm invincible sack, offering promise, a journey
to somewhere unfathomable.

That is why some fear is good, is intimate as love.
And the sky is breathing and the oceans, the seas,
the rivers are breathing. And the beetle and the rooftops too.

Trees sway with the clouds.
The butterfly and guppy are great as mountains.
All chimes of tenderness or tragedy,
seeking its necessary role.
We bear the weight.
We take balloons to birthday parties.
And happy is the motion. And graced
are each of our failings.

path

I look to the earth,
it is a shadow made
of stone. It turns its
grey-lake eyes to me,
it dreams a white cloud,
communing with trees and
growing things - strong
in their mutual stillness.

I look on the December day
where the private racoon roams
and crows congregate
to threaten a passing form.

The path where the young bird perished
is where no one but my dog and I go.
He sniffs the fresh-fallen snow as squirrels
sit motionless, looking on.

And in this tender wood there is no
division between my heart
and God's great wing.
There is no time not brushed with beauty.
There is no pavement slush, no hand
that reached out, I would not hold and trust.

Almost to the Other Side

In midair like a cold relentless
dream, the minnows find me
and tell me tales of insignificance.
In my blood there drifts a fool's
coin and fantastical wagers.
Because I am this person with
that hard year gone and this new
good gift to come, sometimes
it's as if I'm on stilts that with one small
trip, my whole body will come crashing down.
Sometimes I watch the cats and know
I have been made for this place, know
the colour of my sky and the heavy toll
of self-deception.

I still think of you

**in the morning,
when the winds play across telephone wires
and winter's trees.
I carry your face before me
like a sacred chalice, or a goal I cannot reach.
There are things that have changed me,
but the loss of you has split me wide like
never before. I see colours differently. I touch
icicles and give up all other truths. I believe
you are still protecting me, and then I am lost
in the greyness of the sky. Your love is torn
from my side. And now I am altered, I am
adjusted. I am a scorpion walking the desert
sands. I am a gazelle near the waterhole. One day
I am free, then the pain returns like cancer.
I am carrying a child. I am your child
who wishes you could share this journey. But
death has taken your hand. And somehow I know,
darkness is not all.**

Once I Cried

Once I cried the conscious death,
reborn in the orb of humiliation,
mopping the slime off floors,
nausea permeating the base of my spine.

Once I was trapped in a wavering faith,
shifting in a restless sleep
from nightmare to being awake.
My skin was caked in lime, scorched by
the unharvested dream.

Quick the sky cracked as though scissors
sliced right through,
and the spell of suicidal defeat reshaped
into an era that was past and never to be relived.

The house door opened, the sore removed,
the picture frame expanded to encompass
more than I ever knew.

And now with rent unpaid and time
a driving axe, the grass looks gold
as my dignity blazes through the flood
like a beloved ship unchained.

In My Bones

Death makes a brother and sister
of us all, shedding the crusty scales
of protection and vanity, it lifts
each heart bare toward the scorching
sun. And I feel so different now,
as though my wardrobe has been replaced
with someone else's colours,
as though I have joined hands with the earth
in all her potent grief and glory.
I feel so well contained, though raw
as newborn babe. I feel this knowing
has made me whole, though it has removed
the ground I once stood on.
And here I see the space within will never go,
and the tears will be forever near. I see
the miracle of death, like the forming
of a caterpillar's tight cocoon.
I see May flowers begin to bloom,
and know now, that life is not
so long a thing.

Transfigured

Each day I wear my grief
like metal mesh. I see you
as a spirit burdened to speak.
You try to comfort this field
of wounds. You tend the amputees
and bound the screaming with soft song.
But it is hard for you to stay,
to not let go completely into the light.
I let you go. I make this year my bridge.
Though my heart has ruptured and cannot heal,
and I am forever overcome with this sadness
of our love silenced by brutal, unnamable death,
I will build a new house, dive with both hands
into my yard until the evergreens grow.
I will contain you as more than memory -
in my harvest will bloom many sunflowers
of your great generosity. And your fiery blood
will sprout the roots and flesh of passion fruit.
The maple tree will grow large like you, protecting all
within its strong and tender shadow. And children
will be drawn to this yard, to play there amongst
the tall dramatic grass, and then sit still to watch
with wonder the many shades of sky, reflecting
the warmth of your paternal sun-setting colours.

New Commitment

In the wilderness of my dreams,
never shining a colour I could own
as a bluejay, its feathers.
How many worlds must I enter
to peel away to the light?
How to gather sand and build a rock?
And at night,
even love's generosity
is not so glorious,
even happiness cancels out
a great intensity.
I think strength means
knowing how to suffer
properly.
Strip me of this darkness and
let me lean against a beating chest.
I am not to be scattered like a weakling seed
or tossed from shoulder to shoulder
like a child without a home.
In the solid middle I will dive,
driving away my rage and the stuff
of distraction that devours
the better workings of my heart.

When the last tie is broken

and no mentor remains to walk
my hands through the mystery of clay,
and I am hit again by another sorrow,
losing one who has guided my eyes into seeing
a new, irrevocable way,
then the day will expose my passion and test
its worthiness. Then I will be called to answer
on my own and believe in the truth of my dedication.

To shape, to shadow and the sensual magic
that is sometimes caught in timeless moments
oblivious to thought, like walking within
a beautiful breeze and smelling the life inside
all the tiny animals. Like being at the place where
water and earth are like fingers massaging mud
into a vision - a weight
unattainable to the cerebral mind.

Silence

I lift the bullfrog from the waters.
Bread, parables and staying close to a legend -
these are things of joy. I am thinking of the grave
near the willow tree, whose roots have grown
around the coffin, and of a sailing ship
that has no home port, but drifts like
a hollow log on living waters.
Freely I made my room and closed the door.
I knelt for our starved country, and grief
wrapped around my sleep, landing safely in my arms.
My father, I dream of your flame. I miss the woods
and your kind goodbyes. Tomorrow is a keyhole
that shapes my hopes with tiny possibilities.
If I could rise like grass from dirt, then
my nerves would be brave and the smell of the sun
would heal me with prayers.
If my eyes were an ocean where the whale
and the seahorse gathered, then I could see mercy
in the shark's primitive teeth, I would
lie on the surface of a wave,
catching the colours of dusk with
my out-stretched tongue.

Falling

But one belief, one knowing
that absorbs every desire into
its invisible womb. Simple
like a good taste on the tongue.
Perfect as heaven in the eyes.
But one brave surrender, to open
every book and turn on all the lights.
One mind graced with trusting,
sure of the warmth surrounding and of
tenderness in every destroyed hope.
More real than the corners of a table
or the crisp red of a rose.
More real than the shingles on rooftops
or the touch of a spider's web.
But the one thing unalterable, stronger
than death, than change, than the broken heart.
But one thing to give up all else,
where disappointments, fantasies and greed
melt like candyfloss in the mouth,
and time is the gift given to learn
the infinite dimensions of love.

An Infant

**An infant is like a wonderful stone
being shaped by the tide. An infant knows
nothing of solitude and does not believe
in the built-up hardness of
kindred blood. An infant is
the night, is the day, never hiding
its hymn and colours. An infant arrives
from both the nadir of the earth and the
zenith of the sky. An infant has the laughter
to change the most dismal of days,
and the softness of tiny symmetry in its moon-like
face - and fingers, each a little bird,
bringing joy by just being, moving
like dancers' thighs over a flaming sea.
An infant is the eye of the whale,
the beginning and the potential all in one.
An infant is of flesh and perfect trust,
needing nothing from tomorrow.**

Spring Too

In this year when lovers lay
fossilized in engulfing anger
when only the born-rich thrive in the noonday air,
is the same year of leavened kindness,
when parents scatter the goods from their pockets
to teach the lesson of surrender.

The mountain is rejoicing as it merges
with the rising flood. The cornfields
are trembling with fire like a beacon in
miles of darkness. Heaven is a tale that never ends,
is a lifelong pilgrimage, is the tongue
of a fattened snake.

Spinning, the sun, the quenching breeze.

Spinning, the crow on the chapel tower
and the woman digging in her yard.

It is nice to feel sand between fingers,
to kiss the cheeks of a loving child.

Home is an autographed prize,
is starlight swirling like a kaleidoscope
in the folds of my mouth.

Tunnels

I have lost what was left
in the tunnels, and wandered
like a millipede through miles of underground.
The burn of cold brick, the taste of damp air
in my lungs, my skin against concrete.
Friction, losing what's left, but finding
a different pattern to follow, finding interest
in each detail of the maze, finding fascination as I age,
wandering through the narrow medieval fields,
knowing there is no exit,
and I am here - immutable, almost
dammed.

Other Side

Killed in the cloud

that ripples softly.

Believing we would be triumphant
made it so, and being dead we

learned a new way to rise and praise.

The music lies down in the seas,

so I hear the dolphins hum

and see octopi sway.

Madness is part of our heritage

but also our navigating star.

Whisper of the wonder we walk through each day.

Away from the dull chaos of the common bar

this is a new plateau, a hawk

in our backyard.

Up and dancing, the ground and air

join together to say -

we were never alone.

The Ride

Again the stars were plucked
from her mind and the world below
leapt up and sponged her with its flame.
That summer she made a wish upon her chains
and walked the deserted farmyards.
The ravens followed her through the weeds
and heat, keeping up conversation. At night
she sang to the beating of the rain and stroked the head
of the dead bug in her pocket.
She was neither of the mountains nor of the desert.
She was calm as crazy sometimes gets, and the thunder
hissed out her name as the June's morning rays
danced her a sermon. She talked
to her shadow when the birds had gone,
and her fingernails were brittle as cracked ice.
On the seventeenth day her breath collapsed with
the rising sun as the cobwebs about her sparkled, stirred
by a sweetened wind.

A New Destiny

Like a love I cannot speak,
this feeling coils around as a whip,
scorching my skin with its disease.
Break now, like the tense are broken
by gentleness
or the weak are consumed by
merciless rage, raging in waters
terrorizing and sleepless.
Proud of the years spent feasting
on turmoil and prophetic visions. Proud
to savour the call of despair, to have kissed that
face that drove the dream into the heavens.

Inertia. On my back, the rolling passions of
frustration and labour, the illness of mourning
and re-mourning the mortal end. Sing like an animal
that feels her offspring warm against her limbs.
Sing for the chance to tremble with surrender,
and live like this - a body
sown in time.

Beyond The Grave

If all the seeds fell like blood
or blood like seeds into
the ravenous earth and time
was a wagging tail in the dark
then I would know that death would come
by any reason and be a blessing
all on its own. But as it is, death is
the hollow spot of the living - some with
grief and others with fear, and me myself,
it is memory that unbuttons the flesh of my chest
to leave me poked and burning.
It is the hill I climb and stumble
down its rocky incline whenever I return
if only once a day
to meet death's stalking eyes.
It is not my heart that fails me,
but the things outside
like the shadow on the neighbours' window
and the frightening madness of so many strangers.
It is here and there like an insect
on my wall, like the fatherly love
I'll never find again in another's eyes,
but is with me in the coming autumn air,
and in the quietude of these joy-filled days.

As Mad As Mine

Grief is cold as the world
without a wish, riding
the waking land.
I saw the hounds trace my footsteps.
I believed in an everafter,
and the shore was my mansion to fight for.
I drove from the river onward,
looking for a season to change me.
The miracle, the terror before the miracle,
is the salty flavour of my blood.
Sudden love stinging the throat. Sudden
happiness to renew the cage of day-to-day drudgery.
I cry like a seal who has lost her pup to the killer whale.
Tomorrow is not a void
but a temple of what is held sacred today.
Everytime I answer, I lose.
But when I am holding my breath,
caressing the slit throat of all my hopes,
then and there my eyes and ears
have learned the voice of
golden heaven.

As We Walk

I spent an hour listening
to the grey and cooling sky, and the blackbirds
that gathered low.

We are but gestures sown
by particles of love, desire and greed.
Few are one tapestry, most are a bit of
all three.

There was a plague in my eyes
that has thinned my expectations, but
I am better.

Being in love this long is like a voyage
underwater, swarming with glorious and
dangerous beings.

You will always be the one to hatch my breath,
the catching flint when I am shipwrecked,
and the good thing I can hold up willingly to the light.

We have been shown there is no grave,
only the mourning. We have been shown
it is the aging in front of each other
that makes aging wonderful.

I no longer worry about what I am going to say
because there is you, with the scent of autumn
strong in your hair.

My Body Goes

Through the blinds
my body goes soaring
touching the hawk and
choppy clouds.

It dips through the misty air
holding hands with the winter.

It opens its mouth to taste the wind
and sees a balloon float by.

Then it lands in dunes of sand
covered in unmarred snow.

A wren's small footprints lead it down the
slope into the underbrush where a
hound dog has curled into a sleeping ball.

It tiptoes past to the side road where
two children are singing their ABCs
and making angels in the snow.

When back in flight, it rides the twilight's rays
into this room and leans
to sip a drink of cold coffee, tasting
like liquorice candy.

Morning Glory

Lost hideaway under the flesh
where birds of prey drink to the heart's
southward direction.
In liquid sleep a pocket is forming
of voices named in childhood years.
And from the beginning the miracle
sat on our shoulder like a butterfly,
though we never christened it as our own.
I am tossing back the weight of worldly waters
and things to be morally wounded for.
I give no more from the side of my mouth,
for the seductive shadow and the running crowd.
Plain as the path to heaven, I kiss the dread
and let it drift down sea. I open a room
where the light catches my breath.
I am breathing a morning glory.

Girl

Under the willow tree a girl
was standing, lonely with
the worst of nights ahead.
They said
drink from the tar pit waters and swallow
the oysters that lost their shells.
She saw the drug the wind made
though she did not let it shift her steadfast heart.
Everywhere the notion stood
that fighting back is better than
the tender wave, better than
empathy and believing in affection.
The willow leaves have gone brown
and the girl has moved
beside a cliff. She dances as though she
could not fall. And though they gasp to pity
her poor body against rocks and ridges,
she continues to move like a beautiful sound,
sure of the hand that guides her.

The Holding On

When the head of the flower is plucked
 and darkness takes the child's
tender hand, I hold my breath
 under the covers.

For so long I waited for a response,
 and when it came, it took years before I felt
the happy ending. It took me by surprise
like the affinity I felt with the newborn squirrels
 when cupping their soft and trembling bodies.
Over the highest evergreen I race
 with my emblem. I lost
nearly everything I cared for to gain
 a new soul. I lost a passion and gained
a rage against death and the wilderness outside.
 I drink from the underground and am blessed.
I let out my breath and ask this
 final remnant of grief to be gone.

Traces

In the whisper of tomorrow
the wood is burning and the trees
have died. A swallow is perched
on the fence as the twilight nears.
I have taken the hinges
off the door, waiting to see what enters,
waiting as my hunger works like
midnight in my stomach, dictating
the flavour of the coming stars.
Daunted, branded by the heaving wind,
alone with my prayers and the telephone turned
up high - will the answer come before the grave
or will obscurity greet me every new dawn
like a hand unheld or a gate torn down?
It is humming, the sound of this underground sorrow.
It hums of poetry and the earth and the bug eaten leaves.
It burns and cannot bloom in bookstores, will not bloom
in the silence of a single decade or
in the darkness of a closed drawer.
Outside, the children go inside, readying for sleep.
I tread waterways in my mind
and send my kisses mid-air.

Vacant Underground

No sales clerk
or hand to count coins.
A wish is like a wave that breathes,
hunting with the tide.
The sand is grasped but never held -
its form lost again in the unforgiving sea.
I had a wish, jealous and absolute.
It took my days like a nunnery and
discarded all urban vice.
It was my only footwear, my mornings
of praise and exalted sighs.
It caused my bones to snap like a dry crust of bread
and left my innards excavated, desperate
for anything else.
This wish has never died, though for a decade it has been
beaten down. It walks beside me, deformed and chained.
I own it and it owns me, as we walk, born as one.

New Era

From the start I believed
in never bending, but now I am a weather-vane,
guided by singing.
Now, in movement I grow like a wild weed -
a glutton of untouched terrain.
I have put on the iron mask,
burned my skin for the battles
of another. That shore is sinking
and my globe has altered its axle.
I put away my grown-up philosophy
to live by impulse and the pity of God.
The task is done, the ice is swallowed.
It is time to love the gargoyles and create
a new form of beauty.

Interlude

Upon the window's sill
I saw a ghost walking
of a young woman veiled in grief
with sunset hair and moral eyes -
her death drifted to me like
a scent. I called to her, with
overflowing sympathy, but the grave
was now her bed and the enemy-world
was her heart's betrayal. I saw her sit
then look to the sky, her tormented forehead
glistening as the rain did on the roof's old shingles.
She spoke three names softly, and over and over their
sound ripped my skull as if the sun itself had entered
to burn all hard-held secrets out.
I loved her like someone I had long known and understood,
watching her, hardly visible
as the rain pushed on.

End

I see the darkness fully. I face the sword
to slice clean the cancer blotting my soul.
I dive in the sewer, side by side with bacteria,
holding my face straight up. I let my fingertips be
severed so I can free the rest of my body.
I am frightened, looking beyond
the murky fear into a faith, small but glowing.
I have been the caterpillar. Not for one more day.

To get through it, I am going through it -

smeared like a bird by an oil-spill,
cut off from the sky.

I Long To Know

**I long to know the things
I never dreamt
beneath the shingles
and the watered-down dawn.
I long to know the name
of every insect that brushes
my cheek and the passions
of days long gone.
I sit beside the narrow rocks
and count each weathered stone.
I hope for love inside a stranger
and long to feel with fingers and soul
the connecting thread
that binds me to my enemy's door.**

Hard Time Singing

The ground that grows
the wasteful blight and
estranges the kiss and hiss of wildlife
is in me like a slaughtered tribe
that has no face.

I am in the nightmare cloud, wrapped
in tar and rotted wood. I hide
beneath the blanket, undone.

Sickness has walked around me, mile
around mile, and names me this stone chiseled
in two. It is the beginning, but it is midnight
and I am marked to be unmoved.

Flies

By dawn the flies
released their shape into
the soothing wind and what
came back was the weary pulse
of dying wings grafted to the day.
What world was this inside their
dark heads that honoured the
photograph over the experience,
that held up frivolous wealth like
a deserved trophy?
What faith was plucked with the flowers
as all their little tongues reached out to pocket
the short-term scent?
The flies live in their high castles like undergrounds
enjoying only the drive and privileged complaints.
They call themselves the philanthropists and
the even-tempered elite.
But I see them in the honey jar
and count them as already gone.

Serpent in my Shoe

There it is -
inane, insane instinct
in the bedrooms of
the unknowingly damned.
I rise like a rose
into bloom then lose all
my petals to the storm.
Waves and lions under the
sink, and the deepest dream I ever
dreamt was alone with the motions
of darker worlds.
I live with my drink and the smell
of too many ghosts warming themselves
over my vent.
I run with the wheelbarrow, my possessions
piled like dead sparrows.
Talking through the window, I hear
them talking about the petty thing that keeps
days turning and leaves no one free enough
to walk the plank.
I stand outside for a moment
and plunge all I know like a stake
into dry ground.

Still

You and I are a terracotta river
encasing the unmanageable rock.
We drink from the cyclone fire
and fill our ears with the sounds of harps
and nocturnal rejoicing.
When I am touched and my head
is under the feather then time is
fossilized and my body is the voice
that drives me down the curve,
wide enough for an astounding fulfillment.
When I touch the core of your bones
and join the urgency of your kisses
with my own, then we are lured
from our daily plots and cast-out dreams,
until flooded and found by the golden synergy
of our married tongue.

On This Dock

I hear the white steed
and the fish together
in dark obscurity.

I look at the body of water,
the children weeping to gain control.

I listen for the perishing wind
and declare to it a vigil
of telltale strength.

The journey here faces
the drive of instinct - to buckle
in and walk the safest hallway
or to carry the weight of failure
and still harbour a cry to the fox and a belief
in the many shapes of heaven.

The journey knows its evening
has come and all the beautiful clouds will drop
one by one from the sky.

How Lucky I Am

So now she is three
and like a lake that has always been there,
soothing me, feeding me with wonder,
she grows, continuing.
In ten years it will be a different
language we share, but always
the same connecting laughter and the feeling
of being buried in velvety flour
by her gentle ways that move my ravaged heart
into peace.

In twenty, we will drink coffee, sharing
the same window. She will teach me, and I will be
her secret underground where she can nestle from
the revolving world.

In thirty, I will be old and she will be settled
into the source of her strength and individuality.
We will love each other the same as today,
when love is like the very air that rocks
so sweetly between us.

Thinking Outside

Touching tails
and feather wings.
The apple trees bend
and sing of autumn's coming.
Starlings talk across backyards
and the high-pitched beetle
fills the wind like a calming drug.
In this place as summer fades
the quiet demands self-truth.
To pull from inside
a lacerated pride
and pile it on the dried grass.
Shadows mend the divided self
and love is an activity
to understand while counting birds
overhead.

Little boy born

**before sunset
your head a perfect dream,
your hair so soft and gold -
I make my amends at your stroller side
for pain before endured.
I kiss away the darkness that came without solace
and press your small body near.
Little boy of mine
good fortune comes
hard won and not without trial.
Love is everlasting, but never free
of the hardships that make a person appreciate
love
in the full of its glory.
Little child I adore
the smell of your skin
and the movement of your eyes.
I will do my best by you
and God willing, my best
I will not be denied.**

Storm

Quickly shadows come
on the window sill and over the
lilac tree.

Soon it is the song of the wind chimes
as birds fly low.

Crows talk and walk across the
vacant road. Flowers

get ready to lose their colour as petals
depart as butterflies would from their stems. The head
of a child is peering around some drapes while grownups
bring candles from the basement.

City cats curl under cars and bumblebees are still.

There is a sharp curve of the sky and a streak of shocking white
like a line across a blank chalkboard.

Doors and screens are closed, as pigeons and squirrels
cover their nests, blind to all but the pressing
now.

No Hope – For Good

**Understand, I was pleading
like Job under the wire
for the arrival of hope.
But now I see that hope is murder to the seed
of this emerging beginning.
It is not a butterfly shred in a child's hands
but the cause of dark inertia,
giving despair a little more fuel to run with,
preventing the final collapse, stopping the black hole
that will suck the last trickle of false expectations through,
keeping me pinned to this stalled, starved and stale
universe like a crushed insect clinging for breath.
It is hope but also torture that takes death away
from that which needs to die.
It is hope but not enough to build on,
so it is better that it never comes, never runs
along side this something spectacular that is trying
to break through.**

Learning Temperance

Cradle the handle under the sleeve
and watch as the sun changes shadows.
Blue. I wait in the private ever after with
the future under my fingernails and an orange seed
in my throat.

Will it happen or will it always be 'the wait'?
Waiting in the moment just before bloom
but never arriving into full colour? Or is it only
a long pause, gathering breath for the final
swing that will bury all dullness that has gone before?
I see two doors and neither of them are open.
I see a tree I have walked by many times before. This time
I noticed it and smiled.
Maybe this is not darkness at all,
but a line to follow and focus on
like a child watching rain drops - one at a time.

A Better Life

In the beginning
I rode a burning steed,
crossed a violent river
and destroyed my home.
But now my footsteps are slower,
I never climb the rocks or chase
the landed hawk. I collect shells
for my garden and sing to the great
ocean's waves. I take my children
along the shore and show them how to dance.
I tell them my tales of long ago, though
they offer no interest or praise.
But they love me like a petal does its stem,
each reaching to me to know the effort of
my arms. We eat fruit near the underbrush
then bury each seed, tenderly,
in hot white sands.

Just Believing

I will turn while in my days of darkness
and feast upon fireflies.

A new groove will capture my flight
and lift chairs from the floor.

I will be the one whose radio still sounds,
whose sandwich has been eaten
and whose telephone calls have meaning.

It is just a matter of believing in mercy
and not much more.

It is appreciating the smell of my baby's neck
and the times when reading with my child. It is
the love songs I hear every day and moments of stillness
that surround.

The brick will separate from the wall and cause
an unsteady hold. The days will turn over
and the unexpected will enter
 to bless then break
 my fall.

In The Day

In the morning, cured,
claimed and finally welcoming the wind.

In the early afternoon,
assembling the fragments of my faith
like the bones of a bird and then giving it the key
to fly.

In the evening, close to dark,
hair-clipping all disheveled expectations,
pin-pointing a place to lay down, to rest and witness
the uneventful view.

In the night time, quietly kissing my children,
speaking of a golden tomorrow with my husband
but feeling the weight of one-more-day without.

In the bed, almost asleep, checking and re-checking
memories and failures, then unbuttoning to bathe
in the numerous blessings laid before me
this day, this year

deep in darkness

afterall

no matter.

Weather

Walls shake
under the pressure of an ongoing storm.
The storm exhausts
birds in flight and flings
squirrels to the ground.
The ground is hard with ice
and the lost promise of spring.
Spring, children wait for
under the volatile sky.
The sky is tuned by the fingers of time.
Time cannot give a chance accepted or refused
but is the measure by which all things move and die.
Die, the storm is thinning like the skin of a worn drum,
leaving its signature beat on the road.
The road I base all my faith on is under my sleeve
sure of me, regardless if I turn or if I follow.

Only One

What speaks of tenderness in the dead-blue
aftermath of human-induced horror?
When husband and wife are at odds,
seeing only the diseased boil of slaughter
then non-existence, when the pregnant woman
finds no seat in the midst of a
crowded day?

What speaks of holding on when the world is pale
with grief and parents mock their children's love
with coldness and condescension?

What eye can see divine magnificence before
its doom? Or find greatness in what
society has ignored or condemned?

On the rafters a single flower is born.
I look to that single flower, like I look to spending
the afternoon with the ones who have endeared,
like the pulse and turn of my infant within
or a brief morning solitude -
open for interpretation.

Daughter - almost five

I live inside the gentleness of your mind.
The subtlest of emotions you grasp
and give back
in soft waves of compassion and trust.
In dreams I find you
beside me for always,
a friend like no other and new
as autumn's first changing leaves.
We have been here before,
filled with joy and good madness -
your eyes rich as the colours of earth
and your rhythm, profoundly ancient
like the dance of a seabird upon water.
Your thoughts and your fast-leaning heart leans out
to the lost and the hurt. Your brush stroke,
and the paints that you choose
reminds me how blessed I am
to love, watch and guide
the unfolding presence
that is perfectly you.

Son - almost one

Through your eyes
of blue infant glory, fresh
as a yawning bird, I see
heavenly bodies turning
and the last of summer's flowers
appear. Fragile as the space between
the void and faith, your beautiful hands
were born to tower over the stifling air
and shed mercy on my wound.
Your perfect-shaped head is full
of milk and magic. Under your seat,
music flows and you are my light:
a third to add to the other two.
Thank you for your raw temper and
the gemstone of your dimpled smile.
What would my days be without you?
Without the air or this living dream
to behold?

The Flood

Glorious weather, wetting
the decks and smallest of worms.
We were made to split the light
with voices singular and clean.
We were destined to wade in
night, free of logic, partakers
of heart-wrenching dreams.
I name myself lost but loved
and that is better than any key.
I count the madness in cracks
and know the world is ready to turn.
Funerals and baby births and
a barn alive with birds, soon
clouds will come and the zodiac will
burn.

God will be full of joy
and each household will be looking
in a new direction - close-to-the-bone,
materially threadbare.

Draw Near

A Newly-Patterned Fingerprint

It's the end
of my kind,
the last of my line
unfolding.

And then
all of it will be different -
both the edge and the enlightenment,
the things precise
and the things undefined.

All that was smouldering
will be set ablaze,
and beauty and grace will be overflowing
like a drip-drop dream pure as reality.
It is the end - the place of no more new beginnings,
a place where the perfect light cannot fade
or grow too bright, where ironic timing transforms
into an integrated, balanced life.

Blown

Blown like a grain of sand from a hollow twig.

It is beautiful to be blown.

Blown, into the winding forward thrust
where good happens with the movement
of each day and the fire-cracker burn
is a burn of celebration.

Carried through the radar-stream
into an easeful position where
the goal is getting nearer at a slow pace
and old patterns are disintegrating,
remembered but not renewed.

From Us Two

We give our time like you give
wild laughter
and full affection, fearless of rejection.
Two of paint and music,
of flashlight play and dress-up magic,
you are the ones we hold in the torrential rains, the smile
that comes regardless of the backyard trees that crash to
the ground - all wires touching pavement.
Two of everglade emotions,
of all-out tears and jealous eyes,
we bless you as we would the best in our lives.
You have made us closer -
caring for, rejoicing in
the effort and rag-time joy
that is the two of you.

Where Love Draws The Line

Dark swamp surrounding
extremities, the core.
Mass of gangrene hue,
dripping through each hairstrand
and eyelash.
I felt Death talking to me.
It said to relax
into its nullifying void, to break
apart and relinquish my authority.
Then God held out a hand and said
to hold that hand and heal my
hopelessness with faith.
God said to choose this hardship
or choose Death.
God said I will not give you a solution,
only this choice.
God said - I draw this in your reality.
I offer you no escape, I offer
only the rest of spiritual acceptance.
God said
and Death lost its final say.

They Took

**They took away
the long and leisurely shave.
They took the dark and sensuous hood
and peeled it away
to shadeless bold colours -
everything bright and nothing
integrated.
They took the comforting depth
and put in its place a bad commercial.

They took the swelling stars.**

A thank-you note

I liked you for your love
of the little creatures, for the wild,
unsavoury animals that others
have no use for - like rats, tortoises
and cats that are blind. I liked you
for the wound you kept a mystery -
something about your father and a
despair that set you apart from the rest
of the living. I liked our full-blown connection
that seemed to conquer time and mistrust and
prepare for us a feast of sisterly ways.
For a year we held close.
In that car ride through
the farmlands, once I feared you might stop and stab me
under that canopy of stars and darkness. Because
there was something terrifying about you -
something hurt and distorted
by a tremendous overload.
One day you stopped calling,
stopped speaking about poetry, your dog and your love-affairs
gone wrong. Months later you wrote me a letter,
explaining the days that kept you from me -
days of being unable to eat, get dressed
or even call on the phone. For me, it was
too late. Too much so soon and then, nothing.
Like a betrayal I could never get used to,
like a friendship I would always be wondering
when it would vanish.

Only later did I learn your last name.

Days that dismantle

Days that dismantle

the thrones

of 'may I?' 'give me'

and 'I deserve'

Days that hold the devil at bay

and pinch the flowers off every lapel,

of angels under the bed sheets

and smiles in the afternoons,

of dreams that form, fade, then form

again. Days I will try to treasure like a

jar full of fireflies,

when I will not give in, not

give space to the dark pit within.

Days that mean more than money, and more

than the power that it yields.

Heat

It will take me over,
toss me like a weather balloon
and put me on the brink of a high fever.
It will know me and place me
in hot water madness
like a tune just out of reach or a clothesline
pinned against a fence by overgrown branches.
It will take me into the drug store.
I will be spared nothing, but I will feel nothing
of pain or of thinning. Because
I was bribed by the demon and I released
the bribe, and with it, the demon. Because God is with me
like a black cat who follows me from station to station,
is gentle and existing with tenderness and solidarity.
The flies have left my rotted corner,
and all that remains is
this sunflower.

Draw Near

One day the drift drew near
and lightning touched the lips of angels.
The light was left only for the mighty.
So we sang. So we sang.
The murderers were shelved
beside the mighty because the only difference
was degree.
We opened ourselves up while in the rain, open
under the dark cloud, open
through the winters and the occasional plague.
We felt the evergreens between our fingertips
and sold only that which was ours to sell.
One day the drift drew near
and we sang. We sang.

Crossroads

From rumours
left unsaid
the day was raised
and laid out
like a tablecloth or like
someone's grand and meticulous day dreaming.

I never opened my mouth to alleviate the
darkness, but instead I took offence
at the lack in others, not seeing that offence
as my own withdrawal.
But I am changing. I am ending like childhood
ends, and I am
not so sure of myself
anymore.

In My Corner

Kneel to the weather. There is a fountain up ahead,
glowing,

but no one is on my deck - no bones are dry
in my pocket. Criss-cross, betrayal in my juice cup.

Magic is for fools. Living here, my voice cut,

my pet octopus drowned. Living here

in elementary wealth - nothing but

old-world, nothing but chaos.

Will the angels sing to me? I have been waiting
on their love.

So heavy is the window I look through. Brick by brick

I count my way up. My memories belong

to another world.

The bough breaks

and dreams collapse un-cushioned
like the smile that forsakes me
and the wonderful illusion of things past
but never lost.

For here I cut my antennae down
and kiss the pyramid on my grass,
blessed by the end result
but never by the happening:

I know the world
and it needs forgiveness.

For here the smell grew toxic
and the glass filled to overflowing,
but the grime inside never got better,
though polished every day.

For here I cradle my body to sleep,
the long way down is the only way down
and we are sold by the scars upon our throat,
by the longing discarded that never knew it
could end

and by the only relationship we are all
bound to have - our stronghold with or
not with

God.

First and Only

The first time I found you
at the donut shop with the perfect balance
of youth and torment
absorbed in every movement, I knew I found
an eternal friend. The first time you sang, I felt
a fiery and surprising happiness.
The first hug we shared on the church steps
as the music played below was like a wave,
strong and soothing
rippling along my back and arms.
Our first kiss outside the café, when the rain
was about to fall, told me there would be
no number to our days, no greater gift but
to feel this - our lips once apart,
now vibrant, like a new being.
Our first laugh together as we drank our coffee told us
the depths we shared could be lightened by one another,
gave us more than important conversation, gave us
a rope to sometimes swing on and to always hold.
Our two children born were more than blue jays
on our shoulders,
more than any joy gone before, bringing us further
into one another's arms. Blessed by this indelible love,
I am here, counting on nothing but on what we have,
strangely at peace, like the peace I found
the time I first found you.

The Day Is Like

The day is like
the day before
the worm arrived
in a jar at my doorstep.
Before I took the worm in
and fed it lettuce leaves and fresh water.
Before I had something to care for,
when loneliness was the largest difficulty around
and isolation pounded beneath my lids like
a cancer.
The day is tick tock and as slow as waiting
for that needed call to arrive.
I collect the noises from outside
but have nowhere to put them. I open my mouth,
but my voice has gone underground.
The sun looks in on me, but evades my skin.
I don't hold my breath. I let it in and out.
I let the day be a blank wall.
And sometimes a day like today is like
an empty room and this empty room
is a treasure.

Blind Spot

Like a crack in the wall
that cannot be fixed or
a terrible loss that waxes and wanes
by varying degrees but never fully leaves.
It is the spot that will not heal,
found on the floor by the fallen curtain.

It reveals that faith does not
mean protection from the chaos of chance,
only that God will stand beside you
once that chance has marked you
blood splattered and cold.

Faith

It is found,
found in a pocket on a jacket
that has not been worn for years.
It is an emblem of uncharted kindness
that cannot fade even when I falter.
It is a name on a wall
that changes but is always mine.
It is the end result, the start of all
things good.
It is not going to leave me, or seep
through the mattress, underground.
It is so beautiful, it has the whole of my being.
It is speaking to me from billboard signs,
from the ones I loved and lost.
It is the parcel I have been waiting for.
It is my graduation party,
my only hope for recovery.
It is warmth and well being.
It is Friday night.
It is a star-shaped candy,
and it is found.

In The Thighs

Blood in the thighs like
a bowling ball moving,
rotating, heavy, at high speed
up between the
hip bones, into the heart chamber.

Nothing can stop its weight and damage,
nothing can stop its motion.

The trees say "A different face of God is etched upon
my each and every leaf." But the beetle and ladybug
who eat the leaves do not care. And the person snipping
at branches does not care.

Through the thighs, moving
rotating, heavy, at high speed.

Call out to me

Call the number engraved into the armchair

He came like light washing over the many,
entering and cleansing only the few.

He came. He is

what everyone needs,
but the pavement is thick
and the ground beneath is rich,
saturated with worms,

moving,

thick

with worm motion

moving at worm speed.

Our Days

I place my arms up here
reaching for you in the morning
at half-past six and later
when you are just waking, disheveled
and wishing to return to dreams.

In the afternoon when we
finally talk, the brightness of the day
absorbs into your face and what is left
is the movement of our connection
between coffee mugs and our children's play.

At dinner, you tell me stories.

I see the years behind us, and for a moment the
curtains of heaven draw back before my eyes.

At night when we hold and the children sleep,
we talk of the unspeakable things - ourselves for a time,
fully happy - two together
in the arena of society's plight,
two together, beholden
to only this love.

The stone

The stone drops,
settles in the sand like a beetle.
Lovers die
for lack of trying.
Children wait like they
always have
to be made a priority.
The sun is swollen and breaking
on the crust of the universe.
A fairytale in a box, barely opened,
but already stronger than reality.
A last chance stored-up for
old age.
People are falling,
glass doors are ajar.
Someone is listening but no one
even smiles.
That stone drops,
it is made up of hard,
unforgiving stuff.
It stays,
and the surface
is its meaning.

Headlock

It runs away to the room
where nothing moves, not from dying
not from finding its joy.
It was warm, but is now harmed
and drenched in grief like a child too broken
to speak or dream
of flying.

It breaks the base of my heel,
preventing a hope-filled dance. It knows me
in the afternoon, stealing the smoke from my ribs,
the hunger from my muscles and the flesh
from my gender.

It circles me at night like an eastern cloud,
cutting the black with its grey, changing the words
in my dictionary, spilling my love in unnatural oil.
It is my creature to contend with, the armour
I have been sworn to carry,
a twist in the brain that has me soiled, taking cover
in its inhospitable hovel.

Acceptance

I first felt
the longing with little comfort,
as a shape with sharp edges.
I dared myself into a corner
and lost even the impulse for serenity.
In the grey afternoon, coming home,
I saw an inscription in the space
between clouds and knew
I had outgrown looking for signs -
The wind is a river and a house (any house)
is a dead log left in the elements, harbouring life
in its dead crusty dampness.
I had come full circle just by surviving,
back to the longing that existed before -
this time, void of grandiose significance,
existing now like an urge, strong as fire, natural
as deformity.

Undefined

I can't say I am a sailor
who moves forward without ground
or room to run.

I can't say I am a leader who
closes down slaughterhouse doors
or uproots cruel traditions with one swift blow.

I can't say I have a social smile that calms
the afflicted with carefree warmth.

I can't say I am that woman who children cling to
and adorn with their fresh imaginations.

I can't say I am like a house or like a star or water
that rams into rocks then falls back into itself.

I can only say a flower is here,
and I am not that flower.

Whitewashing

What loss
buries the jewel in the dirt,
boards up the windows
and fastens a weight
to the sun?

What loss is this that
denies midnight its miracles,
that extracts motivation
and pretense,
lies behind billboards,
under the deck
and in the empty chair?

What loss I bear
as weightlessness - nothing to ground me
and
nothing core.

Rooms of Joy

We will build four rooms of joy
to honour the monastic sigh, to understand
the kestrel on its perch and the wheelchair
halted at the steep curb.

We will sanctify our moon
with paint, clay and easel - letting colours and moisture
drip through our fingers, malleable as a conscious dream.
We will bellow out music that towers over
the thieves of daylight, races into our bodies, offering grace
where there is none.

We will write poems and stories of fact and fiction to bring
definition to our visions, to lose ourselves,
naked as the calling gulls.

We will hold our meditation stones,
like a horse's beautiful mane, brushing, braiding, all the while,
softly whispering our affection
into the copper-coloured ear of nature.

And the animals will bind us. The enormous love
between us all will cut away
the scar tissue of disappointment.

We will plunge into this temple, playing games,
bearing fruit. In our four rooms we will love, expand
and often falter - fresh and deep, rooted into the floorboards
of this true home.

The Flat Plane of Imaginary Heaven

Far, as the minute mile
that rests on my shoulders
like a dream, waterlogged.
Dirt under my fingernails
that won't go away.
Summer on my tongue
that won't go down smooth,
won't let me near the balloons
or the genuine smile, takes me out of my nest
and puts me centre floor
with the predators - with the dangers
of too-strong a dream,
or like petals caught in the wind.
I begin
to fly
without direction or control,
fly without decision, but wanting a change,
wanting to ride the log down the river,
steering with perfect gusto.
The complex edges of touch,
the final shadow of all once loved
passing over like a life undone,
like a place of magic
but without God,
like a place of kindness but no warmth,
or like perfection lacking any sense of surrender -
bound to the shackles of a predictable reality.

Childhood Cracked

The doll fell
and was never picked up.
It fell by the curb
in a lucid slumber
of inarticulate words
like a dew drop
on ice.

Nothing was coveted,
the chant grew like the moon
as the month moved on.
What was cold inside was a needle
of sharp divide and the impact
of unbuffered death.

Into this autumn
the doll fell
and the meridian of grace
was at last
on the table.

When

When I was a fish the morning light
brought me near the shark's skilled swim.
I would hide behind rocks and sea urchins, watching
octopi and their slow contracting movement.
When I was an octopus, my tentacles could think.
I knew of things like volcano ruptures and how
to escape fishnets and other forms of human capture.
When I was a deer I was in union, safe with my clan,
grazing in the lion's domain.
When I was a lion, female, tense with the hunt,
protective of my playful young, I knew of thirst
and days without food, retreating from the large and
ever-present sun.
When I was a baby child, it felt like there was a stone
stuck in my throat and a restlessness racing through my limbs.
I cried and cried when I was a baby, unfamiliar
with this daunting helpless form.

I Am This Creature (drenched in mute history)

**I am this creature
let loose from the grave,
but still without a Sunday
or a bed of more than weeds and worms.
I am this liar, trapped in fantasy,
a carcass hanging upside down, all cheers and woes
set at high volume.
I was with hunger, a rage of flies on soiled food,
desperate to know fulfillment.
I was a girl, knowing nothing of drugs, but helpless
just the same, a slave to all my girlish visions
of the coming days of promised rapture.
I was a young woman, wearing drab and loose clothes,
never looking in a mirror, talking in tongues,
clenching confusion as a crutch and giving glory
to any glory-seeking teacher.
I am this woman, strong shouldered, a bit threadbare
but wanting
never to rekindle that drowned flame -
a creature in a world of foreign wilderness.
I'm circling, circling a solitary stone.**

I think I was

**I was that man
climbing the stairs to the hospital room, that man
with wavy brown hair and open eyes.
I used to live near the moors where
I would go to re-enact Thomas Hardy fables,
choked with the sorrow of outcast women.
I was that man never reaching the room,
never able to mourn except on paper.
As that man, I dreamt of India -
one day I would go, be under its large, unusual sun,
maybe hold hands with a beautiful deity.
As that man, I never went to India, I died
too young.
As that man, I remember a split in my soul,
the violent burn of uncontainment.
And I remember the feel of bare feet
slowly walking across wet moors.**

deeper layer of love

A bird dying in the tall grass, its wing, a bent leaf
that could not re-form. In the swamp yard, another bird
balanced on the stem of a tall weed, never noticing
the voice of death. The signature of each tree against
an unobtrusive sky. The frog placed by a well-intended child
in the middle of a road. The itch under the casted arm.
What mends the snow? In this land wedged
between instinct and heaven
does anything mend or know a lasting happiness
other than stillness?
Elements carved like karma into a snail's brain,
into the whale on fire with symphony,
into a baby, stillborn, and into its mother, whose substance
is now reduced to a wafer,
fossilized by impersonal failure.
There is so little love, so little to count on but the love
that continues loving despite the not-so-hidden deformities,
despite the limitations that bind us in these ambulance beds.
Only such love that carries the gruesome ghost
of each finite tale
can open the way to a new perfection,
to Gods' infinity of love that sees and heals
by its seeing, by its decided effort of
continuance.

Parameters

The gift of all this crumbles
with a single out-of-sync happening.
Geraniums are frosting over
and the high grass is yellowing.
Yesterday was a cat in symmetrical slumber,
pictures stood straight and warmth
was gathering like a sweet wind over the neighbourhood.
Does this mean it is my mind? like an insect living
one season, sees only that season, dies before winter,
content to have made it so long?
Does this mean the puddle
I jump in, wade in, determine in
is only a pail of water, nothing beside the ocean?
When the puddle is stirred from its stillness or
becomes a bath for snakes or dries up from too much sun -
it is still the puddle and will replenish again
as all puddles do in the rain, maybe
in the early evening just before the lion comes
to take a long, relaxed drink.

Release II

By the land
I have fallen like
a shepherd without sheep
or a feather without a bird.
I have eaten all I can,
and now, I would like to move away
from things such as food
and ridiculous hope. I would like
to let what's left
go numb,
to stifle all passion
with a bland but brutal despair,
to reach
for nothing, to see no
plausible future, to be amused by
the thirst within, to lose the mission,
and in doing so,
lose the truth that there ever was one.
I long to bid farewell to the sun,
to turn cold and nocturnal and let
the darkness claim
final victory.

Marseille

Like you, I lost the spring
in a bed of stagnant water.

I withered under the sun and gained from it
only a small truth.

Like you, with you, I climbed those stairs, cried
all afternoon then sought out a redeeming parable.
In that chapel of our minds we sacrificed abundance
for bones, we traveled together because we hurt and we
saw one another as the proof needed
to confirm the validity of our road. We rented
a large room where commodities were traded,
(or often, by you, just taken)
where we stained the walls with our indelible presence,
cutting ourselves out destinies from nowhere.

I will go back there today and collect the pictures.
I will hand-make them an album then deliver them to the sea.
Like you, I am still denied,
but now I know love.
My axle is female - and though
20 years later, my flesh is barely
(just starting to be)
my own.

Where I Stand

I stood, I followed
like thin glass against the wind.
I moved under the electric wire
searching for joy,
remembering swallows nesting on a cliff,
circling the summer, then autumn
sky. My house was a wound bandaged by prayers
and a struggling purpose.
There is a park and children daily
walking by. There are days without wages
and nights of empty exhaustion.
There are the stark branches
of a pure winter and
the folded arms of old, contented men.
I place myself in the corner of gaining less certainty,
close to the ground
so I can hear the footsteps nearing -
counting on their sound
to break my direction.

Renaissance

The fountain I drank from
became toxic, and the way to make more purity
turned out to be the way to make less.
And so I am small as a lump
of hardened salt. And so what
if my flesh is getting old - a defined woman
doesn't have to fear such a thing,
nor does she have to fear the collapse of her every hope,
because inside she is solid, though
still impressionable,
because she has learned that God's light
is born to flicker, and not to be
a heavy stream.

Vow

The noise broke
by the garden where I loved you
like I loved the truth,
where my bones drowned in your darkness
and my war was unlocked like the need
for completion that you promised but never
could attain. This wilderness
of power, purposelessness and extremes I laid down inside of
to be beside you and the softness of your mouth
and the elixir of your touch
became mine, grew like a second body
merging with my own like death does
with cold eternity.

Because I love you

like the humpback does its song,
I grow by caring for you
and your unfair burden.
A golden daughter, bells in your hair
and a richness in your eyes. I have
all fortune at my door and my only wish
is to peel away your cloud of illness and brighten
your ground. I only see a fine gem's rays reflected
on your skin. I only dream of your dissolved chains -
miles around you of only childish concerns.

I hold your hand as we walk the corridors, tracing
footprints down the hospital halls. Your touch
tells me it is for us to be proud of one another,
to be thankful for this gift that has strengthened our bond.
Your touch is music - your words are as old as the sea.
The fire around you
is a bird. It will perch, nest and then next season,
it will be gone.
Your journey is into the hail storm. But you will be healed,
and I will go on loving you like I love you
like the humpback does its song.

For My Son

You are before me -
a simple light, a vibrant light
void of the world's grey core.
You are beautiful enough, my son -
miles of green terrain surround you.
You whistle, and the strangers beside us
are held captive by your song.
I will not abandon you,
though you fear the anguish of loneliness,
and you feel the uncommon strain
of a raw dimensional heart.
You bring me joy.
I have watched you drown
in a stupor of unharnessed emotions,
and I have seen you laugh at the stars -
you, so much brighter
than the whole of their celestial countenance.

One Wing

I don't know how long I will ride
upstream with my arms around this waning moon,
or if the deadwood I carry on my boat will be lightened
and used. Hope is a hair strand I lost in the waters,
far from any net or shore. All the days are taken
and none are left to Sunday.

I travel this way, cold to my own heart - a piece
of rock in space, a business card wet in the gutter.
By light I try to commune, but like a thin cloud
that forms then fades, I have no idea how long I will stay
a flake - less than broken,
and nothing more.

The Path Before

Inside this cup polliwogs drown
for the sake of a child's curiosity. Following a man
wearing a long maroon robe around his shoulders,
a group walked the dirty morning streets,
pretending inner peace.

I was there, there in the sinking sand, abandoned
to mud and nature. I was there, handing out sandwiches
I couldn't afford to make, following the one
with the robe, thinking he would save me.

Save me from the dead fish lodged in my throat,
from the desolation of my eunuch intimacies, save me
from the ulcer that tore apart my insides like a feral cat,
trapped and too far gone to look around.

Waiting at 4 a.m. to steal away into my cubicle
and watch the dawn break over the park,
or running with my brother
over the farmland of a mutual friend that frightened us,
who we kept because we had no other, as we sat quietly
on his cast-iron stove, quietly in the danger, not together
as brother and sister should be, but separately wondering,
never holding hands.

When I Lean Closer

Remember when we were falling,
making hoops in the sky? When intelligence
didn't matter, only the desire
to be alive? Remember when a different rank
and inequality never blocked a friendship,
when the heart was whole,
and money never shamed us
one way
or another?
Remember the light in our pockets,
the frame of our minds as we lived
in perpetual loneliness, free
but cold?
Remember when guilt could only go so far
to actually change us and a lie was never
stronger than imagination?
Remember our handprints, those handprints
on the wall?

I Find Clarity

I find clarity
beside the open coffin
beside the one made of glass
with the see-through dogma
and beside the one of simple majesty.
I find myself free of the cumbersome hunger
for revival. I find myself just wanting
to be in the shadow, away from direct
light and the attitude of sentimentality and guilt.
I find my hands are strong and my legs
are capable of walking long distances.
I find that that is enough
to complete me.
I find food in someone else's grocery cart
and my thirst is something I have learned to live with.
I find I am not so impressed with what used to
impress me. I am not striving for passion
at every turn, but I find passion at the lower levels
where rodents crawl and babies
muse at the ceiling.

Lines

Sold out by the
something-once-beautiful.
Under the canopy of my heart
the singing happens but does not happen
the way I can explain.
The burn behaves and then explodes
like a blood-lust never fully under control.
There is nothing to gain
by maintaining the same ongoing pattern.
It must be re-directed, surprised
by its flow to be of any critical use.
The line I thought was mercy was merely
sabotage.
The line I can never come back from
is the line constantly underfoot.

It is not

the hole in the wall I fear
where ants crawl through
or the red tail in the wind
that keeps me here,
but it is the leaf over the grave stone
and the cat on the small hill
without a hope of going up any further
that helps me stretch my limbs
and appoint myself a possible beginning.
It is what I hold out for when
the seasonal scent comes near,
when I am not willing to endure
the effort. Then
I am failing
and always waiting for
the answer to arrive
in strange dosages
to arrive gentle to the touch,
however minuscule, arriving
however obscure.

The taste

**of someone else's
memories tracing the lining
of my throat, merging with
my own memories, until there
is no distinction**

**of apple butter
spread across my tongue
thickening as it descends**

**of fire
and of absolute calm
combining and moving
like a wave within**

**of hunger eased
and rapture reached**

**of being fully saturated with
sexual peace**

The taste.

My Ever-Ghost

You make your move
on the rollercoaster ride
20 years into the future.
Being blind is hazardous,
though the blood and the fire
is nothing more than a primal dream,
nothing more than art without sophistication -
thin, lacking strength or substance.
You smile under the cover of a dry and terrible light,
the light of sharp unshadowed
contrasts, a paint-by-numbers make believe
that I believe has cut you short.
The unseen root is the tree's source of life
that you refuse to accept, so you stand there,
straight there, easily blown over,
unable to derive nourishment from what is underground.
You formed my fingerprints but not
the rhythm of my stride. I won't deny you, but
instead I will allow you to burrow into my quiet spot
and build your home beside the measure of my faith.
You are my ever-ghost, the presence of what
I cannot heal. You make your move,
and all of this is yours,
like an act of violence void
of every meaning, an act that remains
but will not endure.

Parameters

Chapel

I hold the air.

I am without control. In this chapel I walk
with my father and the others I loved who have left
for a new journey. I walk with the parables of their souls,
imprinted on my throat, in my belly,
everywhere where there is eternity.

I tell my father of my shell that has cracked in two,
of the burning of the elements and how I miss
his brown eyes, his protective hands and lop-sided
smile. I tell him, thank you
for the poem you gave me when you left, for the dreams
and all the anguish, challenges and reconciliations
we shared. I tell him, thank you for loving me so deeply
as to change yourself, as to let me be a catalyst for your peace,
for your soul's reward. I tell him – I will never get over the pain
of losing you, the joy of having you, how much you loved me,
showed me the generosity of God.

In this chapel, I walk with him,
I hold his hand. I am still his child. I am still
only one.

Only for a time

bodies curse the morning
and find the bulk of their cursing
burned by the awakening of outside creatures.
Waiting, when waiting is not called for,
when what is necessary is to be still
without anticipation, to step into the miracle
of listening - sounds of kestrels circling low, sounds
of territorial squirrels and young robins
flexing their wings. In my eyes, the gulls are angels
arriving face-to-face at my second story window,
speaking of God's grace, personal, sharp and pure.
For the last time, chaos will have its say
and cowards will rule my playground.
This is the time of great beginning,
a time of the final letting go.
The birds are beside me, speaking in ways
I again understand, while the world is carving
new structures of dread.
This is the time of open palms and no favours,
a time of birds everywhere, singing for me, but not
for me.

Cold

on the high hill where there are no mirrors
or sea for millions of miles. Grief underlines
the logic, saturates the stillness from
up on that hill where you have no duties, no identity,
no dreams. Up there, it is all reality, looking down.
Possibilities are relinquished for facts
and the bread in your knapsack
is all you brought to see you through until morning.
Connection is lost to you. Even the ladybug is separated
from the leaf it rests on, and the sounds
of eagles in the distance
circling ever nearer are just bird sounds and bird business.
On that high hill for now, away from your emotional
element, staring into the monastic ever-present sky -
love is just a word like other words such as 'dirt' and 'cloud',
certainly not something
to fight for.

How To Chain The Madness

I will start small,
just a little hole
to plant my herb.
I will regain my equilibrium
in tiny doses, under the covers,
when the children are asleep and even the bride-to-be
has eased her nerves.
I will head slowly in the direction I was sent,
inch my way out of this dark valve, not worry
about the weather behind me or the harsh
possibilities ahead. I will play my instrument softly,
take hours to eat one fruit.
And in that place, I will etch out a rhythm I can keep,
and this form of chaos will at last be clothed.

Taking off my hood

It is only bad weather.

It is only what it is for

some reason, for this light to one day flourish.

I will sit with you in the storm

building a bridge away from this wound,

never caving in to the cruelty of incompleteness.

I will rub your ankles back to life so that

you can walk. I will buy you new shoes.

We will be cleansed of our defeat, be renewed

by one another's touch. Our love has lasted and so

we are far more blessed than any exalted hero.

We should be dancing. But for now,

let us walk. We will be lifted.

I was not a bird

or a bride

**but wedded to the thick masculine
thighs of war, a priest of the dead -
myself a small idol that gathered a
kingdom of followers. I had but one lover,
a soul drenched with my own - long hair
and pretty eyes, a man of calm devotion, while
I enjoyed my blonde hair soaked
with my conquered enemy's blood.
I enjoyed the cries of pursuit
and the galloping of hooves on foreign sands.
I was not driven by the robe or the snake charmer's
deep throttle. I was fresh, never a victim of fear,
writhing with rage like a piranha plucked from the waters.
In the daylight, I was whole. At night, my lover
kissed my ring, my arms and forehead. We made love
with everything left to give to only each other -
two, dying young in a tent, just
before dawn on the brink of battle, never ones for
soft goodbyes.**

Time does not

speaks
of the fall of sages, of how
their once passive journey led
to madness, of the hail that crashed
into the corners of their eyes when their pleas
for mercy were lost by the sound of the plummeting storm.
Time does not give life back to what has died
or even heal the grief of ghosts pacing
through the morgues.
Time is a shadow that envelops us all - it is
hope and despair combined.
Time is two lips speaking different words,
two hands unable to hold each other,
frozen in the spilt blood of alienation turned
to indifference.
Time is bone - breaks everything but suffering.
Time keeps its secrets, undoes the work
of gentle faith. Time is a tale-teller, making us believe
that nothing has meaning, making us forget that it is
only time.

Done

I am done
with the breaststroke of infernal lies.
I am done with the twitching eyes,
people without boundaries - hard things
like crossing graveyards, hesitating
intimacy. I am done with money.
I am through with platforms and curls,
with the forceful devil and things that make me feel
unsure. I see the spring
and it is waiting to throw me
a rose. I see things, and I am done with
the loins of the zodiac, through with eastern gods
and western hopes. This is me, standing empty -
fields on either side. Drown me in this solitude.
Take my blood and make me
a monastery.

pause

Like a rattler buried in its sleep
this season has come, treacherously lifting
from a thin layer of sand.
Grief has come, guilt has come, rage has come,
peace has come.
The promise of flint is over, let alone the fire
of soul healing security.
Miracles arrive, never in the way expected,
sometimes slowly, in small amounts
until you realize something merely accepted
was what was wanted all along.
Darkness was my addiction, but I am done
with cantering through those hills.
I am a tongue, moistened by letting go
of the chocolate bite. I don't need a song of joy,
only a way
to carry on.

Before I Go

Before I go
and put out the campfire,
offering my condolences
to the abandoned child,
I will let my grief go first.
I will dispel it as energy
gathered between my palms, then blow it
like seeds of transformation out of my blood
and into a happy beginning.
Now I will go. Summer is here and my sorrow
has lost its footing. I will make a collage of
my crashed expectations, peel away the crust
until I unveil a flower.
Talking is useless, right now, only moving matters,
walking away from an impossible situation,
releasing the ghost to haunt its four corners,
releasing my failure
to create love.

For My Children

Grow like the seekers do
in the aftermath of an atomic-bomb dawn.
Hunger like the artists do for a tid-bit of happiness
found, held for longer than the activity of their art.
Awaken from betrayal, a harder stone,
a softer soul, sure of nothing but of God.
Burn, until your burning cannot be denied,
and as you walk, they will say "There goes
a star, a sun, a galaxy of fire" Burn until
every muscle aches and the tension pulls
the labyrinth of your heart and mind into a straight line
with straight direction - nothing wasted.
Love, because it is hard, because it is
unusual to have the courage needed to love.
Love, because there is nothing else, because
it is the only heaven known, because it is
the only thing impossible made possible, and
when the dream is over, it will be
the one reality left embedded,
going further than, deeper than
the nucleus of your cells.

Pathway

The power
and the moon and the bride
ducking behind snow banks.
Weather, may I have you to own,
be reborn in the dead afternoon like
a hawk that circles the windless skies?
Sleep, with all the dreams and shapes of dreams
tucked in your mind like precious stones.
I carved you out of grain. I stalked your elusive
steps, looking for you at each corner. Down I went sliding
into open houses searching for your seed, but your seed was
a balloon I could not catch and my child-grip is short, as are
my obsessive desires. Too far down is the raging river's floor -
I am carried off. This time I will not panic,
but sink and imagine I am growing gills. I will relax the burning
in my mind and enjoy the end and then give in
to the continuous flow.

When This Is Over

At the end of the day, the pears will be ripe
and the ones I loved and died will float before me
in waves of growing beauty.

At the end, when all of this leaves, then I will breathe
an owl breath, still in my tranquil sky.

At the end, I will find you, thank you for this sick chaos -
myself, a garden, hit by a massive storm.

I will give life again to the little birds, insects that have no
use or concept of glory. I will return with you
to the Buddha waters, happy to know so much love.

I will walk out my door and there will be summer,
early summer, and you and I

(though bruised and that much more
world-weary) will walk into the warmth:
ultimately loved, unequivocally whole.

Do not define me

Do not define me
as a woman, or a wheel
of rolling curves, with lipstick
in my pocket and perfect polish on my shoes.
I am not interested in shoes.

I carry this body with two breasts and I have born and raised
children like a sacred treaty between the unmarked countries
of time and infinity. I have loved with two arms,
lived with thoughts of Schopenhauer in my sleep and nurtured
the orphan pup. Do not define me -
my sexuality is not confined to the tender receiving sigh,
not to the congregation of gossip and giggles
and the making of apple strudel. I do not knit,
though I bow to the knitters
more than I do to the intellectuals, and gossip bores me.
Talking bores me unless it is about God or the many ways
we are given to love - children, animals, art.
(Lover's love I only speak about in poetry, because that is
private). Do not define me. I would love to be
straight lines, proudly hanging, perfectly clear.
I would like to be brutal. Women can be brutal,
can be like a smile -
gloriously giving, razor sharp, androgynously
beautiful.

Body of Water

Death is a stream I must undress
to enter to know its cool wetness in every
crease of my flesh, melding with me like an
expanse of skin. I've been waiting, moaning
at the dilemma of existing - ecstasy and nights
of bedding sleeplessness like a lover I cannot release.
You love me in the cave, in the lightless kingdom
of your melancholy and your rage. Lift me now from
this drowning. I feel sick as though all my air is gone. There
is so much weight inside of me – the choking, the squeezing out
of my mortality. I cannot stop.
My head aches like a locked room on fire -
chlorophyll all around and mid-day is a serpent
emerging from between my toes. You let me burn the incense.
I burned it, and I cannot breathe now without those scents
to wade in and soothe my despair.

Train

Kneeling on the train tracks: Resigned to this dangerous meditation - a risk of steel wheels on flesh and flattened limbs. Kneeling because I cannot move or adhere to the voices in my head singing of an intimate shower, a transmutation of my solidarity and how I see my special self - love from everywhere singing, dwelling in my sleep which is never sleep but wide-awake dreams and turning from side to back. Kneeling, I hear nothing coming, but it will come - heavy, unstoppable, driven with pure intent. Kneeling until I can claim this destiny without shame, stare at the treasure of hands and lips and touch back, until I weep my centre raw, until I carry nothing but the moment, love again - sadness, shadows, unwashed hair, desperate desire – until I can sleep and stop kneeling – head neither turned up nor down. Kneeling, hearing a distant moan, a vibration – inevitable as this kneeling I must but I cannot not yet not yet let go of.

Quagmire

Coming down, knowing now
that everything known is blindness,
deciphered speculation - constellations out there
that spin, conjoin, burst and create
are mesmerizing but lifeless - into the future,
out from the past - the power is menacing, somewhat, and
somewhat stale, stagnant, just 'happening' like storms happen
and the rising of the moon.

Rain on a leaf or an orange tabby chasing a shadow is
accessible, pleasantly startling, metaphysically invasive.

Many serious intellects are left crawling from the lack of sleep,
from acquiring too many codes and smug victories.

We are small, inside this body of God – a city, drooling with
arrogance and inquisitiveness. That is us in motion, devouring
the zenith and charting out mysteries.

But things get caught on other things. Dead butterflies
can still glow - behind clean glass, inside Berber-carpeted
buildings, all fluorescent lights and classifications.

We can point and name and even think
that energy starts and ends, forget that everything is circulation
and that life here is simple:

It would rather copulate, raise offspring, than count stars.

Inside this body of God, we are cupped in fluid boundaries,
by instinct, by undeniable emotion, stronger, yet part of,
cerebral musings.

We feed from the Earth and we get hungry.

We have these telescopes, our catacombs of understanding,
but we also have pilgrimage, crust, heartbeat, dying,
soccer fields and song.

Now I am Two

It is this way, togetherness:

A covenant with tenderness and speaking thoughts
only glimpsed.

The snow falls like rain as the afternoon moves
without time, our hands pressed as one,
lips and then, something better. Always
miraculous, unexpected, awakening. Always
us, vanishing and then re-emerging with these things
of harmony and friction engulfing our scent and path. Soon,
the tiger lilies will bloom and being just us will be made difficult
with the children gathered in our arms. But this 'difficult' is
whole and adds to our liberation - making coffee, laughing
at things shared and only ours.

It is what was prayed for, what years and hardship has not
diluted, but has fused into an unbreakable bond - us -
the summoning of all our parts - ancient, immediate
so that even when death comes or fate and terrible sobbing,
neither of us will ever be again
without the other
alone.

Intimacy

I lay by your twisted completeness - an ocean
of transformative screams, rolling, lulling, the colour of ice
and sometimes, gold.
I breathe, though I cannot
imagine the radiant death inside you that
maims all warmth, casts out the churning world
like a house fly. Touched by your beauty and
the sharp lines of your natural conviction,
I am final - ripped from darkness into
something too bright - dunked into the chilled water,
naked, my heart not even where it belongs, but rising, rising
not pulsing - pausing and still because
this is not sorrow, not the past nor even is it heavy.
Because I touch your hand
and it is fixed like a star is fixed in the sky or glass
impaled so deep it touches bone. I touch
and like you I am contained, blue - and I am now and better than,
bigger than
a thousand storms.

Lament

It is lonely to be loved by God,
stretched beyond capacity by laws
of magnets, hunger and inevitable reality,
to hold open a hand and have even that
security taken, to smile in the face of pressing,
impossible obligations - things owed, things needed,
and the harvest never ready. It is hard to keep
trembling with service and acceptance, to be at ease
and know the gift will come just when it is needed - God will
choose the music, choose which danger is real and what must
depart. It is hard to not cry, sometimes, just because
the world is so big and heavy and laden with death and arrogant
stupidity. I am free but time is thick
and I get tired of trying to love and
of this loneliness.

Surrogate Dharma

I didn't think I would get lost
or be chained to a contractual victory.
I thought a grain would grow,
become a solid garden. Fires would come, then
firefighters. I would be testifying about
the worth of what survived.

That is not what happened. I fell prey
to the propaganda of affirmations,
to the volume of control I could contain.
My dream dropped out of me
like a miscarriage. I hoped I could forget:
Tie my shoes, zip up a coat
and kiss the shelter I have. Bridges here and there -
they are not mine to travel.
Vinegar keeps getting injected into my bones,
replacing the marrow with
its potent clarity. Do you see? I am getting older.
It will be over
and I have to be able to say I served well.
My mouth opens and folds like a fledgling wing.
People pass - each one a violin note, a digit, a reluctant
panting pitch. Conversations are ash.
I don't like living in these elements, my neck
stretched up into the dense middle
of a monsoon. Let me climb,
dragging this dead beast behind me.
Let me live where my father went to school,
on a Himalayan peak.

I am not a petal. My courage is fickle, it fortifies or fades,
dependent each day on mutual obligatory infatuation.

I can't keep pretending:

The sun is strong. The night is strong. I am not stronger.

I am in this hovel with my lamp, tasting metal
of varying textures -

rusted, gold, and other star-erupted symbols -
greeting obscurity, broken toenails

I can't be bothered to trim. How many rooms, my God?

How much waiting and walking, and the fish? I could be a fish.

Make me

one of those - sliding about, weaving with one full-body stroke
through a lush intricate terrain, mastering
a juicy undergrowth.

I heard a poet say

that doing art is a denial of self. I say
it is an inclusion of God into the self.

It is not simply a dialogue nor is it intellectual banter,
but it is being intoxicated with the fullness of seeing God there
with every thought - in the swimming pool while treading water,
or at the hair dresser, drinking coffee, waiting for a turn.

A pebble is paradox like time travel is, or a meteor
entering the earth like a man enters a woman -
a synergy of the round and the sharp,
splicing, splitting, until more splicing and splitting, until
dependency on oxygen is born.

Speculation, lectures, ceremonies
are deeds to occupy but never to explain.

Hair like a mammoth's - how I long to run
my knuckles through its thickness and ancestry!

I am not intimidated by people with busy days
and many different shoes. Brown

has become my favourite colour, and grey, that too
is magic. I knew this when I was young: True intensity is subtle,
is equal in its magnitude as it is to its intricacy -
It commands exploration.

When I was young I knew God was with me at every threshold,
standing inside my flesh. Since then,
I have played with death,
held conference with death as a sister.

But even such sibling biology
cannot cull this communion I have discovered,
can't vacuum apart indelible combined-shapes
into quarantined segregation.

I have known death's jolts, have known its harrowing cripple
and crack, and know it cannot revert humanity back to that
interval before God exhaled, altering the playing field,
resulting in
such a mighty fusion.

I see differently

**I see things differently,
like lyrics and shades,
differently than the cold pale mouth
of worry and intellectual revelation.
I feel things differently - what was empty,
just background,
a faint perfume, is now sharp, suffocating,
expecting so much from my guarded solitude.
I walk differently, hesitating at the sound of birds,
watching lines in the clouds, a child angry with
her mother and the small cracks on the sidewalk stone.
I sleep differently as though I never do, remembering
each hour passing in the depth of daydreams not sleep dreams,
not resting, but rising, my breath, my flame, living
and musical.
I wake differently, never tired, but full of throbbing,
heavy beating
and the spring is almost here, trapped
in 'the-moment-before', in the power of painted hair
and earlobes caressed and kissed.
I love differently, like I've never loved, demanding
the wind, the desert, a vigil of remarkable intensity.
Love, lacking
dilemmas. Love, like a place to play, playing,
then laying flat out and waiting for
rain, a hand, or stars.**

Now you are

Were you the jealous seeker?

**Always annihilating intimacy, but craving
a pulsating communion? Were you stuck on magic and the
stagnant fallacy of control? Were you pinned to a savage terror,
hating everything that made you feel - trees, a follicle of hair,
the smell of summer approaching? Are you through with that
now? Covered as you are with deep eternal connection -
limbs and kisses, words and no fear behind what might be
opened? Are you through with the angel armour, the denial of
touch, your secret superiority? Are you on the balcony?
It is still a long way to the light.**

**People are mostly ghosts and you are always desperate,
full of instinct, shunning, and the comfort of solitude.
But you are through with make-belief, with yourself being
a rock of brilliant hues. You are through. You are accepting
all that stands here - love. trust. fierce truth – made
again and again
by such brightness.**

Time like . . .

There is time like there is
a carpet or somebody
knocking on the door. The battle
rages in a chaotic frenzy. People
cave into fears as if that means
'maturity'. There is no time like there is
no permanence other than God. Stimulation and bleeding gums.
Sit down, run your hand over your face. I will
run my fingers along your jaw line, your
brow line, and trace a constellation. Be my
instrument, expose the terror I cautiously keep. Call me
a hypocrite and then forgive me, avenge me for my mortality.
In heaven, the Earth is a vegetable left too long in
the fridge. In the mornings, I am lonely but want only
to be alone. Your breath howls, sometimes I can hear it
when you think you are sleeping. Those times I would rip
across any void just to clean your blood. Time is
laughing at us, because we've touched the flesh of freedom
and everything after that wears on our skin, groaning, growing
as instant madness.

The bells

The bells speak of a hurt
that is mounting the circumference
of a life, mourning the death that splinters the arteries,
the hip bones, each vertebrae. Begging to the stars to tell
a colossal fable, a majestic myth to solve this boring condition
of being here, away from the infinite sky, swallowing
mounds of dirt where many others have had their footprints.
Speak of woods, and of creatures that love but cannot
laugh. My lover, I am freed from the concrete
chamber - you freed me and helped me find
an arrow. There is ringing in my ears and a sorrow
triumphant, clinging to me like barnacles.
It is what I have chosen - to not pretend and to kindle
a primal inspiration. Desire like a ceremony -
days of meditation long past, but trances and
swaying and throwing words out, guttural,
epidemic with desire, those days are here.
On the roof, hands at my side. Hurt in my ankles and
in my teeth: A snake is in the front garden and
I am watching it.

Rapture When Walking

Celestial pine and
words like this that stick
to the roof of my mouth -
tight, tense, forceful like flesh
compressed, elongated. These fattened senses, I sense
it is not normal to look at the bodies of
trees and see a mouth, a breast, hips in
permanent thrust, thrusting into to the grey mass
of clouds that are brought frequently to their bloated threshold
then drained in a steady relief.

I know all animals are naked and people
think themselves clothed, but vanity and the undercurrent
of striving are photographs etched on their exposed arms,
necklines. Sometime I might lift my lips, press them completely
into the vines, step a day onto another's shore, lose my gender
and be drenched.

Sometimes, I feel you like a prying lover, impatient with our
differences, anguished by the things that separate us. You have
no use for me, alone. You claim victory, destroy my shell
and make us join, make me not so small but swallowing
everything that is you, like smoke inhaled or
perfume on the tongue. You again, and that
is good because you must know how much I need this chaos
exploding, lingering, desperate to find synchronicity,
then arriving - order and beauty, exact. You must know.

You gave me an eyelid. And I am arriving

sweet, silk, surrounded
to this place. My God, I am
home.

Something found

Babyskin and bare,
these roots protrude from
the steady earth, assaulted
by squirrels digging and the sleet
of nocturnal phantoms.
Breath, I need to breathe like being
touched and not so alone, received
in male waters and a female sky, accompanied
by tirades of kisses, kissing jellyfish and crows.
I need to move my eyes slowly across piano notes,
type each sad circumstance, shine my injury like
a just-bronzed statue and wait to be collected.
But the salt is fresh like thunder, entering my mouth,
making its way dryly down my throat and I am tired
of bitter happenstance that is boundless with surprises, never
worthy of a relieving smile. I am centred in this silence,
anticipating a hunt or legs I can conjoin
with my own. Flowers are small. I can hear trains in the morning
when windows are stubbornly closed,
when I am walking and it is dark,
and the space around fills me with the ache
of unintended solitude.

Our Time

One time, gentle as
an easy friendship, singular,
melting waters together.
One time, hard as
sobbing exaggerated,
a comet touching Earth.
Two times, small, awkward,
fleeting as an image in a cloud.
Four times, sure, obvious as
resurrection - touch narrowed, concise,
an album of exact sensation.
Last time, a being was born
from this authority, ecstasy became heavy,
exploding a thousand golden flowers.
Next time, I will stop counting and be like time,
there without an echo. I will be a painter, a beggar,
tied to the taste, venturing closer, closest, but
no further.

Our Light Cannot Always Burn Whole

Nests that stay through winter
are similar to us at times - left abandoned
on high barren branches,
valueless until spring - if ever, even then, reclaimed.

We jog through bitter uneatable harvests, absorbing
disappointments as our only viable feast,
not heeding our self-honouring needs,
too proud to address imagined or deliberate injuries.

Jackets buttoned to the neck, we move in these sewer shafts,
trying to shake the foaming stench off
of each other's tailored attire.

On our bed, we are broken, letting our arms rest
like a Spanish squid's tentacles would rest,
pulled from pulsing waters. Our mouths primed for confession,
our eyes scanning features - short hair, skin under the eyes,
familiar necklines.

We tell each other these things are worth
the horror of abominations
accepted as societal norms, atrocities justified as a soldier's
directed bullet.

Here in a shut-in space, we can lock,
shed faculties of crusted reason,
create a colourful spread of sensuality, messaging
our blood vessels with deep oxygen, curing, learning
to make saliva and swallow.

We tell ourselves sometimes we wish
we could be like those who live
never knowing an intimate tender beauty,
like those who get shipwrecked,
daily hunted by a cancerous loneliness.

At times we wish this love didn't exist, then we could give in
to what lies beyond the cliff, defend our exit, salt the Earth
with a dramatic departure.

Those times, we hear a desolate chorus rising
and we vanish completely into its volcanic siren wind.

Other times, we talk. We watch squirrels dance across
our backyard trees, make tea, passing domestic glances,
gladly sharing the last spoonful
of bottled honey.

It starts

like precipitation, infusing
iron seeds that rest atop the ozone-dome
and flourish. Somehow I am coming to terms with
churches I will never go back to, and last-year's friends
who own creative nobility but fail to nourish.

It is starting, culminating like a blood clot,
anchoring me to my drive, wringing out my squishy insides
until they are parched, until the robin's song registers austere.

Escape happens in the morning,
wading through yesterday's debris,
fascinated by scars and euphoria that comes opening airways.

Can I conceive of a crime that will not haunt?
There are rules to follow, bones that fit into sockets,
sacred formations that must not be tampered with,
and speeches spoken, brave enough to own on paper.

Biting is war; be it biting on silver,
gently marking areolas, or lacerating wet teabags.
I forfeited what I thought was a shield, sure it was
more than only emptiness swelling. It was
a birthmark, nihilism reclining over my pre-destined zenith.

There are things that start then overtake.
They emerge pure as children,
touch ground and vaporize. August is hard.
In that critical heat, everything that wavers between worlds
gets erased - splits up into two categories
of corpses and lifeforms that take celestial flight - ends up
where water sinks or where water concentrates,
either way, falls
but does not flow.

River

I will run my breath across your eyelids,
go to you, trace the edges of your hands,
finding infinity inside your torment. I will
drift into you like wind and you will not mind
my lips like a concentrated shadow on your skin,
darkening but leaving no weight. You will let me
be inside your picture, a background to your lyrics,
softly at first, I will heal the red in the whites of your eyes.
I will release my wardrobe for you and you will be the mania
that I climb through to reach tranquility. I will
cup your flesh and stretch you through this intimacy because
I own you as you own me and it is not a bad thing, not
blasphemy or anything
to fear. It is your hands, mine - these
poignant burial grounds that have been excavated,
these days of standing close, depending upon the ease
of our mutual exposure. I will speak in your ear and you
will step into my voice
like stepping into a river.

It's been months

since this shell's
collapsed and I have been intoxicated
with this hard joy of immediacy and a world
without blunder or hesitation. It has been irritating -
to feel this hot longing in my gut, reflecting on nothing, worrying
about nothing but the smells around me,
the power of pale hands
too close to so many faces -
the long black rope I climb and climb and love like
my only wardrobe. It has been months since I left
that heavy weight behind. Guilt
is something I've outgrown
and my blood feels poisoned
by this strange alchemy.
I know it is not female or male,
but saturated with desire and burning and swelling -
not in flashes, but constant as the pulsing sun.
The unsettling of this surprising
heaven - the knowing that I can look no further than today -
seeing both like an insect and like a god -
breathing through the terror,
at peace with the terror and the thousand lifetimes
it took to get me
to this place, unbound - sliced in all the hard places
and so. and so.
explosively, barbarously
connected.

Waiting

is secondary, serves
to sustain the illusion. Better
to bathe in the molten heat, dig out weeds and pay the bills.
Better than pretending the chalk drawing won't fade,
that the overalls fit and the twirling webs glittering
in the sun do so solely for beauty's sake, not as nature's balance
to its otherwise invisibility.

Formations, adrenaline - geese call
as they split the undertones of sky. It is better
to have no fences, no boundaries actualized
by the mind's pride, no tangible hopes
of personal importance. The sidewalks are torn up
and there is nowhere to put my feet. I don't believe
in waiting, being patient while aroused.

Once upon a time a child's voice
was all I needed to save me - once there were scooters,
pigtails and baseball caps. Damn my world
for changing, for making me ready, but falling behind,
insufficient to nourish this latest being that has arisen.

I will not wait, not be killed daily
without knowing climax or the aftermath when nerves stop
scurrying and there is quiet enough to collect good memories.
Better to partake in war or to crush anthills.
Better to be left in my monastery where the brick walls
have a shadowy sustaining glow and my lover's heart
is walnut strong, drained of expectations,
giving, yes, but rudimentary, self-contained.

Seamless

Raincoats and rainy seasons are behind us now.
I picked up a feather.
You took it from me and now it is yours. And just like that,
rich as the coral reef waters, we were initiated into
a lower layer.

Intensity is a button. It is concentration - one part,
one of your parts unrelentingly explored while ignoring other
distracting sensations. It is the thick blood raking of thighs against
our lesser faith.

Fears of the future put aside and left to their weeping.
Shoulders become secrets receiving probing pressure-point
intrusions. Like a primeval working of strings,
through this communication, we see
the courage of our history rise, become an advancing truth,
and our pores
grow and sparkle like thousands of tiny sun-drenched ants
pooling together to parallel a single purpose.

We know 'just survival' is tyranny.
What we seek is not movement
purely for the sake of employment, but to create canvases
of vigorous struggles - ones that can only be cemented
in unison.

Our bodies have abandoned their blood-lines.
We are touching every crease
and tense design with undiluted intention -
first blotting out words, then delectable conversations.
We rejoice in the grand dramatics of our compatibility,
equally committed to corporeal immersion.

The past culminates in this single outpouring. It is
a privileged evolution. It is months of misfortune
exterminated by the exertion of our mouths:

Strange rhythms are risked, foreheads pressed,
giving way
to beautiful unadulterated disclosure.

Find me

Can I see it? Gravity like glue
or something more substantial like
the sigh of a sick child. Find me like
an open tulip, smooth, tangible liquid. Find me
like science is found enhancing the faint glow of
an almost-faith. I am reeling with need, chosen to bend
into this desperation as hips bend forward,
seeking the electric dimension of togetherness. I must be
an oversized squid under deep layers of ice, unaware
of such things as galaxies and weather -
breathing in my cold hell,
shipwrecked in this cavern of isolation. I must be unable
to love - impatience burrowing into me, past
muscles, touching the skin beneath skin. Yielding, I am
yielding to its mouth, subterranean pressure,
feeling the anxiety of knowledge
that disinfects each particle until
it is made nude, until it is like a knife-tip to the cornea
or a standing ovation given to all that swells to capacity,
pushes even further, then explodes.

Morning is beautiful. I am planting.
Will you find me, honour the primrose on my veranda,
maybe evensnip one, take it to your table and dream of a voice
other than your own?

Back

Carelessly moving from place to place
but changeless as a brick under a porch
and strong as that brick: A taste
of stagnation, purified by the bonds that have kept
you from fulfillment. There is heat drying
your light, and dead things that have been making
their way beside your immaculate arms.
I have been trying to
lift them with my hands. But my hands
are made of thin glass. And these things
have thighs and impenetrable open eyes, looking at you -
wondrous lover, missionary of the current. It is only them
between us, between the wall and the way out.
Take this mortal thinning and give nothing to regrets:
We sing for each other and you are free. I feel it
in the sparrows lined along the roofline and in
your tired features morphing into winter branches -
richer brown, moist - like just before
a spring bloom.

What face?

A moody afterglow - the error of thoughts, hopeless
when it comes to laughter and the power of worship.
On the table, there are self-deeds, failed
revelations, kneading and prying wide a soul
that doesn't want to be recognized. I want you
to allow me this success, to find the flavour of your eyes,
shape them with tools and my thumbs, to press the flat
hard edges of my palms against your cheekbones, press and
form the cause of your pride, your loneliness, that seems so
important to maintain. Curled toes and chins, your chin
is becoming, shifting from strong to soft. You are neither
masculine or feminine. You are privileged - to be so
beautiful and uncommitted to a single way of looking. Look.
Your hair - long or cut off? In real life, there is no
perfect symmetry. You are bold, accurate -
your nose and the lines around your mouth is my contemplation.
Let me know you. Be courageous.
Let me pry, split and mould your inner
workings until it is clear (for both of us)
as love.

Why have I died

like Icarus? Or like cotton candy,
dissolving in lukewarm saliva?

Five weeks without pay, and
the weather is morbid,
plays upon my skin like fireants.

You took what I denied and changed
what was paltry into paramount -
my feet pressed against your calves, lifting
into the pressure, just
to have a choice.

Why have I died? My neck cut
against the broken window
as a resolution to my determination to see beyond the pane -
repeating like a recurring dream, developing a wider lack -
lush pulsing, possessing your sternum
where I rest my panting will upon.

I am dead. Can't you see my decay? Can't you see
the violence expanding in my throat?
How have I died? before nirvana? after the bliss
of a mother's faith?

The sparrows come close.
They know not to fear a dead thing.
They land on my foot with its multitude of intricate bones,
tendons and memories of backyard earth.
They look around, peck below where still
remains some warmth.

Once I fed them - minuscule fledglings
fallen after a storm. Now I am over.
I do not eat. I do not feed you
or anyone anymore.

Long ways and no ways

Out of phase with the frame others are drawn to. At last,
illuminated, released from artificial expectations.
You will not correspond or accelerate into my atmosphere.
My magic is inward, and the gravel you picked up and misplaced,
rolling it over your lips to find a perfect indentation,
I have held it too - for moments at a time, swinging in the wind,
fruitful. But I know that is not my natural practice or
a possible habitation for me. I must stand behind boards with
the spiders, while you are sunning -
an artery of pearl-like significance,
attentive, lubricating glory, improving
your already abundant harvest.
I will not make you flash-cards to categorize my plight,
or give you the pulley cord of my broken development to pull
and make use of. I am not a substitute
for a makeshift wedding ring.
My only protection is to give up. So I give
you up. Your glorious atlas open, appealing to the otherwise
immobile crowd, but not to me. I've left the track, left this road
I picked - for one year I have been walking and have met
so few believers. It has been inadequate. You
have been fraudulent and have unknowingly plagued
the thrusts of my yearning. Energy matters: what doesn't fit
doesn't graduate into a tangible weight, will never be
sun or iceberg.

Long ways I have loved. For hours, I have kissed
the bridge of your nose,
conscious of my fixation. In my bed, I offered you supremacy.
Now summer draws me away, tells me this work is done,
asks me to go forward, to map and mend
a child's ragdoll that fell overboard
where the ocean stretches on and keeps
no hidden crevices for toys or wounds.

Grace mightier than Natural Law

What if eternity was marked in a mirror,
and we lived there like animated ornaments,
reproducing each dot of matter as reflection?
Especially love
drilled into the furrows of fear, or love
withstanding betrayal by latching firmly to devotion?

What if what we perceived as solid is itself artificial
and that true existence is elsewhere, is a multi-layered
holographic construction coating our reality? As if death
was the overture of our lives, rooted in continuance and
not defeat.

At times I can taste myself slipping
into the tip of a Cathedral ceiling.
Weapons I cannot use become suggestions,
impractical solutions, there to
analyze other highways not meant to cross.
Highways bearing bright moonlight
on their surfaces, like correspondences looked at
but never read.

At times my singing is subdued,
and I discover these highways I am not welcome on,
find myself disassociated from their flat hum, from their
pavement platform and worn-over buckling curves.

Memories are funerals - the hours we spend
traveling their domains.

I spend my time studying trees. Some trees are not beautiful,
but are depressed growths, even in their grandeur.

When flushed with foliage or sparse, these trees
emanate an aura of monotony. Like looking through
dirty glass windows, watching
pointing fingers, listening
to a zoo of indistinct, inescapable sounds,
they have been drained of vitality.

Ballooned and warm, I am transformed
by the pressure to create symbols to improve
an already great equation.

In this way, I hear a toddler cry, and I think
it is impossible to grow up
and not carry as core the experiences
of kindnesses given and kindnesses withheld:
For we all know it is soothing to be tended to,
to have someone wash our hair.

So what then if there is always a camera
taking pictures? Then it must be important
to be frank in spite of showing rough edges
that spark criticism, disappointment, or a full-body
malaise. It must be important not to falsify speech,
to be able to disregard
pleasantries or other forms of stroking public appeal.

What if I closed the door, turned on the fan, turned on
the light, would I learn to swing or be a domino, a causality?

Principals move like wolves commandeering prey
or like a dozen eggs dropped - their effect built on a single
gravitational happenstance.

What if we are marked, already surviving forever -
each exacting
fraction of ourselves duplicated?

God must muse through such thorough descriptions
of our lives, an overseer of our personalized library, defeating
what seems irreversible
with forgiveness, erasing without remnant
the imprint and impact of things wrongly given, taken, or
left to starve.

Edified

Was I bound by the artificial?
Driftwood down an interceding flow?
Horse stance, back muscles rolling, lines of twine, and fishing.
I will not fish or tighten my spinal cord
for the appearance of strength.
I will not bask relaxed in hot spring nobility or lick the nose
of prey I someday plan to devour. Was I combined or conditioned
to make a unified shape?

Loudly, my name was spoken. It was God, I am
sure of that. And it was angry, pressing, urging me
to wake and take nothing lightly or so hard.
It was the second time
at the time of 2:30 a.m., when my bed flushed with instant
rigidity, lifting me with dominance
from the gardens of my despair.

It was spoken as a permit to build, to trap the past inside
the future - not as vintage romanticism, but for the sake
of journeying onward, to be integrated
with what must be re-owned, absolved by the fact
that nothing can escape the impact of eternity. I was shown
that the igloo mansions I once erected,
featuring such elaborate depictions,
cerebral justifications of indignant loneliness,
were natural and could not be dismantled.

I heard my name spoken, calling me to dart alert
from a shrinking sleep, to walk the hallway, carve
myself an inclusive center, to answer boldly,
unconditionally step
into the dictates of a personal command.

I go inside

to hide
from the wind and
the windy things the wind brings
like popsicles, icicles
and cloud watchers on their backs
ashamed to speak without symbols.
I retreat from the rocky mounds where
toddlers hold their picnics and the cardinals
rest, oblivious of camouflage.
The daydream that sustained me all last year
has weakened in potency, now is just a fleeting habit,
a camper's terrain I travel to, flooded,
swampy and putrid, fraught
with the imagined memories of sing-songs and linked torsos,
clogged now with pestilence and unrealized connection and
the stars. I still see them overhead,
ordinary, insignificant - never astounding enough
to bleed cosmic capacity into my dilated veins.
Veins waiting to be juiced, to be breached
of their thin-layered confinement - myself waiting to be more
than a catalyst. So many reasons to keep moving,
but none impregnate my spirit, none immerse me or
insist that I take up arms. My arms.
They are hanging, tingling. They are not
me. I am in hiding, away from the wind and the windy things
the wind brings, part of the pile of the undeclared, an
illegible signature.

Matrimony

I have been taken on as your lover. I will not deny it
any longer, taken into a divine, subterranean refuge
where my lungs separate with a sharp divide,
squeezed apart like playdough, and that is not all
that has been conquered or dismembered.

I trust this burning bond, but I am hardly keeping pace,
letting all other responsibilities go, paying no mind to the traffic
or to the baby squirrel at my doorstep.

I have been tagged your concubine, marked now
with an irrefutable identification. I am not in this body anymore,
not like I used to be. I am flowing in and out of atmospheres,
contained by dark matter into the surge of these succulent
prayers that claim the wavelength of my individuality.

It has always been - you on top of me, me over your back,
finally both of us abandoned to the pressure,
moving in sync, blasting out a ferocious harmony.

And the crows, on treetops, never letting me out of their sight.

You and them and dark wingspans

cloaking the shell of my brain, causing an explosive beat,
a ricocheting rhapsody - always just you and me - together,
retreating from time, gesticulating our revelations,
gyrating on beds, on cushions - scarves loose around our necks,
force-feeding each other, promising this and that, and the sun.

In my eyes, your sun, your legs beside mine have become mine.
It has never been any different - I've been a fool to think it has -
this tugging on my lead. Love, so much love, our love, is sweet,
murderous. I am trying to understand but I don't know how.

Tell me, I am listening. Expand everything
then crush it in tight, blindingly bright,
pinpoint.

Plastic

Plastered with glue,
sticking like betrayal like a spider's eggsack
to a branch. I watch your gorgeous
pontificating, watch you mourn just a little. The injury
rips only part of your body, fragments you.
Grief becomes a tremor,
an uncontrolled twitch under your left eye.

Everyday, I journey to the drug mart, handle
bread and vitamins in the same hour, thinking of your music,
showered by these harmonic intonations
of your irate loneliness.

I will never get clean. I knock down garbage bags,
pocket unsharpened pencils,
buy myself some tea, thinking today I will let go,
rid myself of your domination,
purchase a splendid fantasy to replace
your magnetism - saw at roots, trust
the broken staircase and climb.

You have been kind, when your thumb strokes
the back of my neck or when you let laughter escape
from your stoic eyes. Money
has never been my brimstone or firewood - there or not there,
but always with the fragrance of just-skinned leather. So
you see, that
is not what I want you for.

But I do want, and not just a portion of your stamina,
not just a gasp of deep disturbance, but to be at the vortex
of your desire, the one you rely on to rebuild your toy train set.

It is too much, picking up shampoo bottles, looking
at lipstick. I know it is too much - these yearnings that beat
and these necessities I need are the same, but you

are still in my mind
pushing, ploughing through and through,
saving me a plot beside your plot
beside the potpourri covering a stranger's grave.

Sanguine

One small awakening to accept
acceptance - a lethargic arm on my shoulder
weighing down. Air that is security has never been my ocean.
I have never been able to trigger kinships in a field of sunlight.
No light
has more volume.

I am content in places where my imagination can reign,
where definition is arbitrary, redundant, and not very useful.

I tried to love you, dive into your trachea, show
you the substance that enriches my cells. But we have
different vocations: I make windows. And you stand outside
with your scales of distraction, participating, socially at ease.

You have grown tall, wedded as you are
to the world's expectations.
What once was lean, marvelously eccentric,
has become typical, robust
as an animated ideal.

You gave up your awkward insecurities, replaced them
with suave affection and loveless sex. You are not warm,
though you feign warmth. You know how to act -
teeth set in alignment, and your apparel - clean of cat hairs,
with the appropriate amount of ingenuity,
just enough to generate interest but not alarm.

Old people are getting older and dying,
they can hardly believe
it has come down to this. They lose their lovers,
have appendages aching with weakness - fingers
that cannot move on cue to stroke a cheek,
fingers that want to flesh out, plump up,
become tantalizing again.

I have taken you with my fingers,
awakening the soft space between
your naval and groin. I have laid across,
massaged every ounce of need
into the vulnerable region separating your hipbones.
And I would go further.
But you have no natural shade,
and it is too exhausting to keep toting around your wares.

You supplied me with inspiration. The postage is paid.
I must move closer to the edge of the road for you.
I must make room,
walk past, surpass, enter
my Rosewood red front door, without.

Ripples

The fault of sages

Love was there
spreading hope like jam over my taste buds.
Then the first skipping rope broke,
got snared on a fence and frayed.
I stole away on a subway train where
hundreds have gone walking into a warzone.
Amen to the end and the predator's
happy-go-lucky disposition. One claw,
one tentacle, in flowing precise motion.
Another lifetime and it may be different,
tender as lovers beneath their first full moon,
or worse, like cartilage deteriorating.
I rehearsed a familiar pattern,
sabotaging memories to find a way to be holy,
to make only God matter, dismantling adult days
of calculation, days of stultifying impulses,
of consciously unplugging the push of inspiration.
I flicked the splinter and loosened its stem, learning
that every homecoming is different - some shed
their most treasured members, others,
an accommodating persona. Still others constrict
just to pitch thought and become a pulse.

Love I lifted like a heavy stone,
trying to grow flowers between sparrows' toes
where they nested and puffed up under eavestroughs,
trying to weave myself an escape in the shade,
a carpet to lie back on.
Solutions were bare,
offered crossword puzzle satisfaction
but no retreat from passengers staring
and the continuous stab of uncertainty.

Templates I now break and breathe and blow all away
into the sandalwood spring, into the eyes of my dog.
Stiff joints lend themselves to patience,
planting wings in my palm - empty spaces finally
accepted. Shadows I see take on a life of their own
and keep dancing. God I see in the sloping deformity
of all steps climbed, treacherously taken, born whole
from parallel paths of lack and yearning.

With the purity of a single intention

Days of history voyage low
into nations, beside graveyards.

You played with the existential architects for a while,
breathing in their deconstruction, but your laughter
languished. Straddled between crossroads,
you could not form a picture.

Days of comfort can be understood
when the crack tents with severity enough
to slice two wholes.

In your mind there are mountains
you have lost the ambition to cross, or to look up
at their venerated summits, and listen.

You have lost the cunning to cope, continents of wayward
possibilities. Look up, for the sake of past miracles
that swooned into your embrace like found love
as a perfect match

against fatalism and rising futility. Look up - out
into outerspace

and grow yourself a fierce mystic midnight.

Whitewash trails and gardens, places
where children are allowed to dig a hole in the ground,
tunnels where the earth shines copper
with forgotten buried pennies.

Look up and drop the stone of objection,
the stretching sorrows of realism.
It is divine, if you choose it to be.
It is the freedom of a fugitive, freed
of the rusted bars, equipped with appetite
and the exuberance of a gamble.
The ship is lost and an ocean is gained.
Water and water rhythms
are teaming between your toes,
salting your hair and open wounds.
From side to side, look at the glorious space around you,
then up, envisioning yourself strong-winged, safe
as a seafaring bird.

Before you

wide with surrender
with no backdrop or formula,
with the accomplishment of releasing
plans by the wayside into the swamp
that used to be an instrument playing,
a cliff of clay forming a tireless gale
of heavy sensual dreams.

I belong to you and to the strength of your empty hands,
the endings you leave me with, harvesting
ephemeral food - a soul full
of coastal curves that break the waters and is broken
by them, pressing and caressing the chain of tidal
obliteration as an umbilical cord connecting
to the vast sweet space that is you.

Never meant to anchor roots or climb a sturdy cliff,
you stop my struggle to illuminate a typical liberation,
gaining the wherewithal to stay pale,
upright and destined in my cage.

For it not a hellish home, but submerged
in the damp abandon of your shaking,
it is subject to your prying appendages poking,
tearing away speech and understanding.

I am yours, withdrawn from words into a connection
washed with elements of prayer but unlike prayer
more like lemonade to the day labourer or grass
to the grazing mare - away from bit, halter and reigns -
your sun sinking its evening heat into my back and shoulders,
erasing division, drawing an intimacy
that frees my blood's natural flow, squeezes out
the clotted clump of summoning-up
of years scarred by grief and hidden,
rebellious longing.

Under the vines

Ways the willow swishes freely,
washing the wind into the sun.
Child in a tree fort dives fearlessly,
surging with elation to and fro:
over snails and uncut grass,
elements passing, back against the evening sun.
Waves are the evidence of the ocean's breathing.
Minds run swift, masterpieces of destinations,
forming their own geography.
Reality burns like a blood-clot -
an over-stuffed museum, updating slow.
Pirates of power and horoscopes bleating,
the only refuge is to forget.
Out through a backyard window, the willow tree
owns both ground and sky.
Imagination comes as suffering's negation,
potpourri to the stench of debt and worse-things owed.
Destruction overtakes too easily,
like a once-hollow ditch, now satisfied with its
fill of bones. All needs are political. Heaven
comes close in secret Sex, immortalizing flesh,
though never arresting decay.
Child on a vine joined with the ways of the willow,
swinging, thrown-off shoes.

Lotus

Sleep, into triumphant sleep,
waking is a tide of abysses and senses
reflecting illusions. Cursory stresses,
repairing at the bedside where my knees bent in prayer,
scuffing my skin with cosmic complaining.
I've thought about this, and I've decided
not to care if I fail at swimming or grooming
or trophy-getting, or in collecting egg whites,
having more than what I have
necessary on the table.
Love is the weathervane is the station,
earning eternity, a teaming ocean worthy of a dive.
The rest is a stunted fetus that will never coo
or be baby-dream sufficient.
I've spent too long weight-lifting chaos's hammer,
flinging myself from wall to stump.
I have eyes that hold me, another's and another's
I can take pictures of and sing to, and I wish for nothing
but to retain this fertility of tender revealing.
Children and the final history of desire,
predestined to return as a speck - own my freewill,
multiplying with the rhythm of a brighter responsibility.

Sleep, for I've never existed
but to count this love and to love this way
personal, a cliché of bloated ignorance,
with a mouthful of famine and an armful of miniscule miracles,
gestating, spiraling, blending into the soft brown sofa,
tea in hand, leaning on another, amazed
by how good this is and how very long
this cozy reverie has lasted.

Ripples

Dirty dish, I lift
and know I am holy.
Does it matter or mean
my feet are mine,
though they cramp,
and my skin is a littered shore?
After moving in, it makes no sense to dream about
round planets or miracles hunted down
between spaces, in the flesh of dark stars.
Blessings come like other conditions, feeding,
filling, then the fish is hooked and the river goes on.
How many cupcakes can I keep? Not many. Not one.
At night I wake up absolute,
solid as a never-touched stone.
I stare at the clock and have conquered time.
For that time I am the best thing of all things to be.
For an instance, I am more than metaphor, I am witnessing.
In the day I hold out for a fickle hand's generosity,
sweeping floors and making beds.
What a hot rhythm to keep, like kisses and eclipses
of sexual elation.

Two thousand eons, and the cosmos continues
as a body just born.

Spotlights and warm lights, my love is my fulcrum,
he carries me entirely in the dips above his clavicles.
He mixes me incandescent colours, enters me
like wings tightly folded, plunging into sea,
coaxes me to thicken, be a builder, take what I can
and build.

There are names

and allegiances that triumph
when spoken aloud. I do not speak
these sounds or have a country
that edges near ecstasy. I have loved badly,
pessimistic, fostered a hostile vacancy
of fantastical hope. Insolent towards God
and the steady rapture that only comes with patience,
I purchased an industry that leaves no mark,
makes nothing useful
or sweet.

Remembering my waxed-leaf collection held
within hard cover books, and the frolicking of field mice
that burrowed patterns into my head. I sat on the bus and
I was alone. Did I know how fragile sanity was, unlocking
doors, imagining mountains on the surface of the sun?

Snared before my shelter broke
and I could be saved by surrender.
A thicket of needles and bushes trembling
with little birds. Contact. Glint.
Won't something rush at me, increase my odds?

I could send you away, then I could live
cold, complete as a reed or as an angel.
Science will not have me. You will not let me go.

Remembering seashells wrapped in tissue paper, in a box,
on a shelf, just above the closet floor, counting them -
rough external even ridges,
glassy sheen empty pocket inside.

Govinda in the mud

This line of devotion that moves
bitterly as lust tracing unresponsive thighs,
cups a poor groan of invisible blooming,
following you underneath a diseased tree,
smelling as you spread your aloofness
and mingled your affection tighter with the dealers of denial.

It came to me at first in healthy moderation,
as a permit to appease my obsession. Then it grew indecent,
flushed through me like a spell, drowning
my apprentice music with your own reclusive master-drum.

I found you in the carcass, in the millipede's dart into the drain.
You swelled your glow across all my sunny spots, mighty,
but not brave, only bored with the circular twists
of relief, thirst and sorrow - diamond clear,
you asked for everything, wanting nothing for yourself.

I knitted together the practicalities of decomposition
to the voyage of your ever-increasing detachment,
understanding what you did not - that love
is not living alone on a dried-up hill
nor is it consuming every crumb of dream-life
until the flesh is reduced to accident.

I cannot rekindle my devotion, so I must leave you
to authenticate a future. This deed of leaving is like you like
a star - old, seen many times over by many eyes,
power with no purpose but to be bright
and desolate, eating away
waves of darkness, emptied of praise, tenderness, the bullet
needed to puncture a human heart with revelation.

I do not believe in nirvana. I do not believe in immortality:
when things change they die and do not revert.
We were, it seemed, perpetual, connected
by the red rope of my loyalty.

I am dawning. I that is I,
cracking the dome of my hereditary inertia.
I leave the shadow-guilt of solemn yearning, and also you
of coral-reef intricacy, simplicity, perfection.

I know I am alone, though permanently imprinted -
by my years of unnoticed devotion,
by the shunning of personal expectations
and by your long finger,
tanned, transcendental, a spiritual aphrodisiac still
pointing.

Snowy

Sad as sleepy morning comes.
Soft ground to rest your chin upon,
soft like you are, in need of no one's
flag or ego-affirmation.

When you walk
children wave from car windows, elated
to see such unmasked joy - mouth in an open smile,
and eyes, happier still - dark as toiled earth, alert
to the house cat's twitching ear.

Satisfied in the full morning sun, you move
from sidewalk curb to road, sniffing at poles
and thin strands of grass
as your long clumped fur like a sheep's pleated coat
ripples in time with the end-of-summer's wafting rhythm.
Treats, stuffed toys and laying contentedly
on your back, these things are enough.

Many have tried to imitate, parading
their off-white pups through neighbouring streets:
They saw you once and wanted the same.
But you were claimed by a private angel.
Fastened to good karma,
you glow, you germinate, and you proceed.

As you sleep by the door
in and out of your doggy dreams,
you defeat the need for tomorrow's schemes.
With an unassuming soothing moan
you stretch then continue in rest,
abating the weight of my human despair.

Voice

When you talk it is not
a shimmering sensation or
a delicate fluttering of
nature's delicate best. Days
are not here like you are -
an open sewer grate, a crushed
locust. They are smudged and flat
as a textureless dream.
Helmets worn. Grievors
with their now-permanent-grief etched
under their fleshy eyes, cheekbones and chins.
I buy buttered pastries, leave them
by their doors. I hear your voice.
You are trying to reach me with an old painter's words
of resignation and reluctant wisdom - words
I cannot make use of.

The dead evergreen in my front yard will not revive.
Like me, and these things I clung to, it must be replaced
with something of less substance, of more obvious beauty,
like a red rose bush, birdbath or sundial. Or,
I could leave it there, brown and dry - a monument
to what was once lush, gorgeously plump, once withstanding
winters, the heat of global-warming summers, green,
wondrous against my window.

I could walk faster than this, chat with the neighbours.
But I won't. Because nothing is here but you, only,
and my feet can't find the motivation to pick up pace.

**You talk. My aura is a smog-filled season
where your sun's rays barely seep through. Days
with stones in my stomach, rubbing against one another,
pressing their hard weight into places.
I have no drug to ease my longing. Will it be long? Years?
Will I make it through to the Fall?
Do you have more to say? Say it then, differently.
I can't go on repeating,
where nothing shifts but these stones,
sharp-surfaced, blocking my intestinal tract, pressing
with each step, demanding acknowledgment, denied
release, a minimal hope
for redemption.**

The Book

Inside, spending all my coins, rejoicing
on ephemeral longing, on a lustful inhale
for physical redemption.

Hidden in the pages, I am hidden
at four in the morning, bathing in perfection,
lifting into heights that obscure drudgery.

Thoughts are shapes that float as shadows,
hardly solid like butter left out of the fridge.
Cages unravelling and houses cleaned of cobwebs.
Between soft book covers freedom kisses explicitly,
candy-ices without embarrassment.

Hanging on hinges, on barely glanced-at walls,
I gather my vision in the grass, paint on the
bones of another's life - beautiful bones and hallways
of many feet walking and swishing bathrobes.
In the book I can face forward and never fear rejection,
I can shower sensuously in warm rhythms,
tied to the stirring light of early summer.

Love between these diary covers is not just canvass
or thick hues that merge and make a middle, it is where I will
at last know another's body as I know my own,
be protected from the torrential pawing pierce
of middle-age loneliness.

Inside the book, you are under me like a bed of lavender bushes,
there are waves where once sunken skeletons rise like coral,
polished pure of their violent history.

Drowning in the book, imagining ants collecting,
synchronized on an apple core.

Bells in my head, footsteps rising, closer now,
you know me well. Inside the book, you know me better.
We are two trees - branches and roots, an interwoven crocheted
impressionistic portrait, staying through heavy storms.

Inside the book, we are creatures of greater sympathy.
You are like yarn, tied to my brush and hold, never in
the liquid valley of a distant boat, or obvious as a prickly,
rigid rope. I am mature, a woman with a ceiling to touch,
fifty feet of surrounding stillness, unfettered
from the expectations of my time and gender,
radiant, more, whole.

Neruda

I can't be and think like you,
majestic in your sensuality,
Godless but deep with sorrow, forever restoring.
From you I see women's hips.
And though I would never care to shield kisses upon
their soft swaying mounds, your waters swell
and grow and make me long for Spanish trees,
seascapes I saw as a child. Rising male, always like a mountain,
you pick granules from the ground, place sand on your tongue
and name the sensation.

If I could be and think like you,
like a native river that has known no footprints,
gathering rowboats, families of endless generations,
my house would sing, fruit would fall and
I would hold a hand, glorify each fingernail, memorize
the exact curve of each cuticle. I would retire,
rest my shoulders on an old bed, loosely clothed,
feeling the Mediterranean heated breeze encompass me
like a lover's welcoming demand for unity. Speaking,
my words would drip like oil, gifts
of oil and bread.

Our children are orchards

By the door

we wait for the end of school,

for the long day to bloom

to lay to rest the tricks of superstition and our obstinate ache

to be carried to the next fertile shore.

Blocked, but that too must be an answer

to the polished space that compresses and invades

our waking hours.

Risk that comes out of despair

as a last ditch effort to not give up

has been told in chronicles, as surrendering stories

that rain away dust and heal the hunt of weighted hunger,

nourishing spiritual belonging.

Leaves and feathers we collect with our children,

graveyards we visit to look at lost names,

where our hands seed deeper into the Earth,

rise higher than the hawk-bird into the stratosphere of grace,

grace as wind we depend upon to navigate our footsteps,

to quilt together our four-way love,

cooling the cut of arduous days and pilgrimage.

Where are you? I've been calling

**and waiting, soiled and famished, anticipating your return,
circled by predatory chains. There are things
we need to talk about. Are you
here, or just a synchronized inspiration, energy
as icing for one day? It is not enough.
I need you here, not galactic but like a man
before his wedding hour, needing me too,
focused entirely on my fulfilment. Where are you?
In the sparrow-droppings? In the kitten's fear?
I cannot go forward so close to the lurking eyes
of mire and sacrificial doom.**

**Why are you leaving me blindfolded,
tremours and hard lumps invading my body,
aching against the sky for you,
on my knees, in many ways excavated, sagging without
mettle or substance? Where are you -
in the sideboard? The baseboard?**

**Compel my breath into freedom,
sing loud in my left ear, love me
like a solid spike, but weightless in its consequences.
I drive the rattle. The world is huge and**

I am capsizing, eaten by its ignorance and filthy demands.

Where are you? Did you fly away?

Can you be my gravy, not dry and vague

as a passing half-hearted smile?

Can you not pay for my funeral and be done with the obituary,

sending me into the afterlife, a new life

of baby days and infant trust?

Where do I hurt? For you, everywhere. It is impossible

to escape, impossible to cross my legs, fold my arms.

Tender or with a shovel pounding,

break through this cobwebbed room,

give me a background I can play with, a full dish, delight

in the splintered wood.

Endure

the brilliant fractures,
repetitions of wars and slaughterhouse squeals.
Once more, brought to the tower, looking
over - so easy to sway and not think of the
consequences. So easy to crash the wine bottle
over the piano stand and stop the bad music playing, forgetting
there are so many things better left unexplored,
like feelings that extinguish boundaries, that are soft as loneliness
or under-appreciation. Sunglasses always worn. Endure, wait for
fullness or for medication,
wait for that one hour to be adorned by another's desire,
embroidered into another clothes - when wounds and failures,
(for that hour) are reduced, overpowered.
Moon mountains and muscles, patterns build life. God,
there is creation without you - there is everything -
grandfathers, butterflies and sand dunes.
Unpredictability is glorified. Minds rejoice,
gaining rules, workable explanations. Endure,
why must I? Why, when denied
a boat, a bed, a simple wild hand roaming? Love is absurd.
Love is you God, and you are outside of all this,
waiting for an invitation,
tender as a new mother's nipple, flowing.

We sorrowed far when the sky tore,

**but moments of union bent us
to glimpse a lavish paradise, yielding
to our bodies stripped of speech,
becoming portals to the ever-now,
our aggression was holy as we hunted for sacred acquittal.**

**Evolution, we often think of being what we are -
counsellors to elevate the potency of each other's dread.
Talk is a hood, a roughly-strewn path to our tortoise-tread.
Touch is precision, absent of air, rattling staircases, galactic
in its suction of sand and hair and pores
that voice complaints and monetary aches,
tethered to this cruel house.**

**We live inside the march, ruined by darkness.
On this Earth, we have one pasture. Churches will not do for us
what they do for others. We have outgrown
our guilt, our last names and the bitter sword.**

**Our colours are common only to us, thickened
by our mischief-tar and unspoken humour. Ours is hushed
and chasing, dripping with moods, unreflected
in the polished jewellery.**

On a new planet we will be remembered,
congregating among the fractured
as a shaft of gracious amalgamation.

Drenched with this mercy, we will be a light switch
that spares no memory or obligation,
brightly displaying the decayed and burning,
colliding in composite, fashioned by our fusion.

Among the first fully twined, what we are
will sprout then thrive, be immune to misinterpretation.
Dimensions we will enter as an interchange, our feet warmed
against the soil of the moon, locking calves in place,
digging and dropping, basking
on the plains of our emancipation.

Walkways

New Wheel – The Passage of Arnik

(king of a small land)

Part 1

My skin was stone,
drenched in an accelerant and
lit on fire. And there I burned,
a flaming rock impassable by
every woman and man who
tried to cross my shore. My fire
was final, a never-dying-heat
guarding the dead cold core
beneath its frantic dance.
Murder was easy as was laughing,
glaring bold-faced at the sun,
but languishing in waters, still or stormy,
was never my game, only, swift, loveless striking,
blistering and charring, beating with a spike
any imagined challenge to my seat in the center.

You covered my face with your hair,
let me sear it, then the skin of your face, to the bone.
And still you would not leave me, give up
on my indomitable obscenity – finely-tuned
to the leftover ash of my tenderside.
My madness was your deformed child. Even when
you ended me, taking an axe to break up my hard form –
you were more sorry than I was, heartbroken
to scatter that fire, watch its petering-out-existence
on the cracked concrete fragments of what I once was.
For me, it was freedom from its burn,
a relief, relieving me from the devil's obligation.

I couldn't sing. I couldn't speak, but
I saw you crying - such strength
embedded in so much softness. I forgot

you had a formidable side. I forgot
that love was a ruthless wielding sword -
for both of us - terrible, unforgiving and
stronger than either of our self-proclaimed mantras,
better than personal devotion, brighter
than the burning or the burnt, tortured,
cloned-for-infinity, layered upon layer, like us,
molecularly as one, irreparably damned.

Part 2

Tentacles, unfurled, then
curled, suctioning out
the snail from its shell.

Through the narrow hold of hell
I built a kingdom, wide and ruthless,
I cut the heads off the keepers of faith,
increased my stature as I did my gluttony -
sensual overload.

There was a tree in the courtyard, old and by its own.
Everyday I would chip pieces off its bark, because I could,
because I knew it hurt and I wanted to murder it, slowly,
this old beauty that held its ground longer than me.
I wanted its stillness, if not to own, then to conquer.
I obsessed over its carved-up flesh, kept its pieces
in a box by my bed, one day planning to collect
the whole of its body in many boxes –
building a shelf for that alone.

But that day never came, for I found death
by the swift hand of my lover, after love-making
after laughter, almost sleeping – showing him the tree pieces,
while gloating at my cruelty, he sucked in my dark wind
and gathered an axe from its exhale.
He watch me fade. I faded,
spilled out over the bedding and the hand-crafted floor.
He cried openly, pressing his
lips against my skin, he sang to me –
laid the bark-pieces tenderly across my chest –
and there I was buried, there, in dying I awoke,
for the first time in that lifetime, trembling with peace,
I began a journey somewhere, home.

Part 3

Inside the white hot soul
that boils with bitter outward
blame, primitive in its inception
like a just-born-star,
born from a black hole sink hole infusion
of pain and power – tight knot force pouring
from an unguarded door, gushing forward like
a colossal flood, lifting homes, babies from parental arms
and the nesting rodents from their burrows, remorseless,
lashing this way and that just for the sake of it,
for the sound and for the consequences
I could unleash.

Whispers in my ear of love
were an implanting-larvae insect bite
to pour vinegar on and be done with.
But they burned, these larvae beneath my skin, traveled north
to latch onto my spinal neck nerve, hatch again,
consuming me with ignored madness.

I kept myself pure of sentiment until the end, until the next life
when those larvae overtook, and cloaked my retreat
with parallel barriers of shame and guilt,
called me to a time out, to be removed,
to learn discipline and control, gentleness
carrying out daily simple tasks, bothering no one –
small, self-sustaining, glimpsing a first taste of a personal
God as I
let the weight bear down, through the darkness, building
a sanctuary where I could chalk-mark the walls with my crimes,
come to terms with accountability.

Gradually, many lifetimes later, those larvae
grew translucent wings,
thin, but strong enough to lift me off the ledge of confinement,
into the light of a new longing – a vision bursting,
birthed from both
a streamlined-focus responsibility toward a tender eternity
and a well-cave of feeding minerals, feeding,
blunt-axe perpetually hacking, holy despair.

Part 4

I speak of a cloud
fanning north - it went
past barricade ripples,
ended in a thin line above a blanket
fog. Wild disorder,
language I could not steal or make up,
but found the natural disappearance
of all things in its fate.
A creature obscure, placematting perfection
into a one-dimensional genius.
Good riddance to lineage and the shaming
fish-flight up against some sharks.

I touched you and you were naked. It felt
greater than love, but it was not so. It was
wider than a lifetime and swayed all over
the map, cloak-covering the appendages
of tyranny and a tyrant's response to fear.
We rejoiced together, exhilarated by the possibilities
and the perpetual spin weaving macabre plot
that lead to this glimpse of redemption.
It was the end - hoofprint on the grass
made invisible by an onslaught storm.
Even for the weight and starkness that came after,
I am grateful for the chance
you gave to be reborn – to dare myself
into solitude and austere discipline.

I speak of a cloud
then of a king that was a man
who lost his heavy shape and substance
in a calm sky... know it, know it now,
a law, an equilibrium
dissolved – miraculous
clairvoyant space taker
vanishing through, into
a covenant-keeping once
impenetrable wall.

(monk in service to a stream)

Part 5

Grace, grounding
in the mist-wrapped shelter
blooming in unison
with perfect stance and form,
killing my individuality to make
a stronger whole.
Orange bright red flare of robes,
sounds of marrow spine resonance,
stillness in speed, visible energy,
rolling, turning, flattening the air
from inner pressure – sealed, smoothed,
kneeling by a stream.

This kind of power accessed, focused
removed from ego and uniqueness.
Finding peace in discipline, saving beauty
in spiritual structure – every moment counted for,
every thought overseen and filtered through
for further simplicity. Clarity enforced
in the great dream of camaraderie,
in the common goal of God-mind, balancing
force with receiving,
honouring with accountability, weaned off
of the still swelling teat of desire, living far off
on an isolated high plane, holding heaven
in a tea cup, celestial gardens in a rice bowl,
learning to blend mastery with discipleship.

daily striving for perfection in the body's movements,
daily failing, giving it back, committed
to this pulsar event - filling up, choosing 'yes',
then willfully deflating, releasing the hold.

Part 6

This hand
split from the source
but not fully detached,
forking downward into
a vast otherness, depending on,
giving honor to the root, to the means to
keep nourished and whole.

Gently submerging in a stream,
entering an alternate atmosphere where
minnows school and scatter
and micro-organisms build communities,
interactive bio-worlds, unaware of the invading limb,
fingers, looping in erratic rhythm, glorifying in
the soft texture shadow, moving through with
easily overcome resistance,
encapsulated in the water-body,
entering, exploring without destruction.

This hand,
only feeling like it has gone somewhere
when removed, wet, knowing it has been
where oxygen is heavy,
where the rich showering moon gravity
has more say, greater mobility than it does in air.
Crossing dimensions without disruption
or impact, here holding stillness,
inside of, open to a passive discovery, then lifted,
hovering over the surface, dripping back into the stream,
gaining rich skin ridges, enhanced sensitivity, at last,
visible saturation.

Part 7

Guardian of the small water
flowing - pebbles lining
the edge, shaved head resting
on the ground.

Loneliness widened in those few everyday hours,
listening to what went on deep below the surface
of the stream, honing in on frolicking fish,
predatory fish and the cycle voice
groaning, never withholding its display of extremes.

I closed my eyes and dreamt I held two shoulders tight
between two arms, wrapped myself naked around another.
That longing lingered well past sleep, as I rose, it rose up in me
a discontent, birthed a being, a pulse
beneath my calculated fold,
thundering through my well-kept peace,
brought me closer to looking,
looking at those fish, seeing a richer kinship in their company.
As I looked, that loneliness quickened
in its demands, buzzed louder
than concentrated contemplation or a prayer.

There was no apology left to play out, not here
in this place, on this isolated rift on a mountain, not
when other beings moved in a more intimate connection,
tied to the vine and the sun and the fish
gave birth to eggs that were inseminated
and transformed. I could hear
their chattering, bubble blowing and their unquestioned
communion - each tiny one crowned perfect, even when
left half-eaten, perishing on the bank.

I drew back from my commitments but did not leave,
simply waited and held the promise of you in my dreams.
In waiting, I sent a call out to you, finding transportation
through the drumming chant, into distances
beyond my bent knees
and the gleam of my weapons

over cliffs and villages and oceans I told you
to meet me the next time over, choose
this place, choose that harsh violence of a home
and I would choose mine, not far
but far enough from each other so when we finally met
we would be mostly cultivated and hurting enough
to give credence to each other's importance.

While I waited, I tasted your flesh in each grain of rice,
rolled it down my tongue like solid nectar, digesting it,
I kept up my call, told the stream to take it downwards too.
In silence I kept my secret, broke the machine,
and betrayed my brothers.

I had no choice but to tend to this flame, press my hip bones
against yours in the other space that started small
by the stream,
gained dimension and lengthened on the inside, stretching
to bare-toes, to fleshy ear-lobes, flame
that circled my bones like a hungry bird,
broke them into pieces and swallowed them,
glittering, gleaming hot in this longing, still
a stone on the outside, dutiful while I waited,
letting that flame infiltrate my organs, veins, larynx.

I loved you absolutely, in the wild intake outtake breath.
I ate as always in slow movements, with one hand, eating,
the other, ripening, building in heat,
calling out, preparing for our wedded harvest.

Part 8

Standing on a petal crust, ground
by a stream, sinking into wet earth
where fish corpses lie buried,
surrounded by minerals and mountain stones.

Sinking as the sun arrives
and my heart seizes but is not afraid of
drowning in this damp graveyard,
knows it is a sacred blessing to be called
to dive into the underground
where light and water still reign,
knows it is pulled, plucked and twisted but
will return to form through a flexible core,
elasticity intact, inner elements uncompromised.

Going down further
merging shoulders and neck, readying to breathe in
the divinity ground, harbinger
of worms, death and thin bones, keeper of
the Lazarus resurrection

and the sun seeps into my parted lips
as does the soil. I close my eyes
sinking, unable to hold air or hearing.

Honoured to offer it my flesh and my singing bowl,
I am covered in this stream-infused ground of a shroud,
vessel-body overtaken, vacated and then transmuting,
dissipating, ready to feed the root, be healed,
find you again, and in loving you,
be equal, irretrievably joined, boundless together,
opened, never closing, owned.

Walkways



Dual forming on slopes of darker minds.
Succulent nodes of effervescent whispers,
whispering Oh! Blood clots bending
in unison to sharp solstices.

Dig and reap tomorrow's regrets,
piled on like love you thought was comfortable.

Comfort is a guard you let loose,
let down and found judgments -
platters to be served and roasted upon.

Singing for sale. A number left to a key. Fickle
verdicts oscillating between indifference and approval.
Release and acceptance - what else is there?
I am only unhappy when I want what isn't.

Platypus cans of tonic - drink down, flushing
through organs. I see orange. Orange buses,
orange lines of direction on the road, in homes
where anger is held at stillpoint. One point

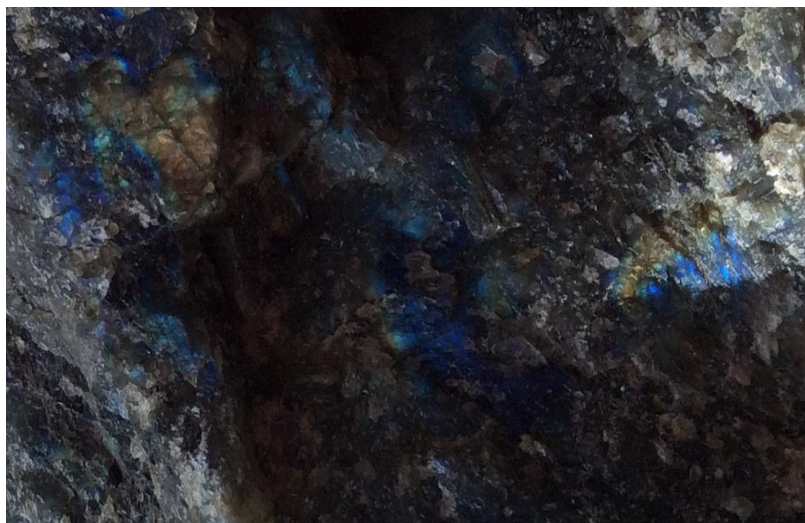
on a curve. I have lost my feathers,
all means of flight. There is nothing left
but hunger for the skyspace, outerspace, space
where I once travelled through meteor fields,
ballooning over planets' edges like a seamstress,
owning it all before I got grounded, committed
to personal love and the necessity of graves.

Why did I come here? To cry for my loved ones,
hold vigil for the slaughtered pigs?
Centuries that just were, lingering, licking
on waves of vastness, licking dark matter like a candy cane.
Not a soul, but the planets vibrating their orchestra - deep,
varying at intervals, then again, and never changing.
God, what am I doing in the sunlight - on the sidewalks,
making room for children on bicycles?
Putting pressure on my shoulders so I cannot sleep,
cannot appease this malcontent.
Why did I leave - to connect with misplaced animals?
Babies only born? Looking for union when before
I thought myself whole?

Material made from the moon. I understand
the beauty of caves, the great sea turtle's solitary plight...
but more and more - I never wanted more than you
again inside of me - infinity in corporeal form.

God separates to know Itself. God is only what we give,
awakening as we do to warmth and kindness - choices
under the wrap of gravity and yet, somehow,
lifted into altruism.

....



Smudges, under siege, patches of calcified tissue
and the swamp I enter in - fuming with failed love -
connections broken under the Buddha fire. Detachment
will not save me - nailed to the pavement stone, looking at birds.

Summer where have you gone? Smells rise to meet me,
and the air is still humid, pressing on my cortex,
corrupting my ability to choose joy.
Grasshoppers hopping. Will my heart be broken?
Again, again, squeezing, squished
fermenting at the sides, foaming and fizzling, burning sage, but
it is not good enough, not enough to teach me the strokes
or how to steady the raging chaos gestating large
in the pocket of my throat. Continents on fire,
inside organs necessary
to function - why the children? Why not me?

Livingroom-light-globe like a crystal ball,
opaque but powerful enough to predict possibilities.
I was never here before, never heard the angry rodents
vocalize, never slept with aching joints, dreams
of running low and ferns and moss
covering Zen-garden displays.
What else are we going to do here, but procreate, create,
dissipate and die? Van doors left open.

Lawn chairs on the road for pickup.
The windmill, the tilting tops of trees, heavy
with clusters of fresh pinecones.
I am an orange peel, orange, peeled, drying
next to the sewer grate.
I am limp with the weight, the burden of random happenings.
Always I love you and always, I am breathing.
Take me into the arms of your protection.
I don't want another day.
Mass of thick porous grey hovering, no space for hope.
Why the children? Couldn't you spare just them and all
the up-for slaughter animals?
I am done with this place, the tripping curb,
callous indifference - the rippling consequences
of blind destruction.

....



Piercing, lingering, chiming out a hymn, lullaby on a chain.
Remorse to wade in like a sea-salt bath, absorbing
the past into the present cellular flow.
Mounds of construction sand, building and restoring roots
without life, chopped down at surface level.
Ideologies fuel, then turned to cinder by anger -
justified violence that violates the laws of love.

Skittering up stairs, the last time I held a leaf I held
your focused form, unable to stay the distance,
but stayed nonetheless near rudimentary desires.

I am cut like a lawn, smooth as carpet. See me now,
skateboarding, jettisoning over humps and bridges.
The wind - position me inside your storm. The last time,
strength enlisted an empty street - such vines
and beautiful stones!

**Mercy in a crack, a masterpiece of twin creation,
outside art galleries - living wood, sleeping shapes,
inviting holes... holy as sex, sweet hands entwined.**

**Release into me as I release into you,
in mutual receptivity, clear direction, directing energy.
Dew drops evaporating, shining.
Our masthead - brittle, breaking. Even so,
how we are combined! Such glow.
It is glorious to know you like this
and not be afraid.**

....



Laid low, laid out like soulmates never meant to meet
in this life, in the spectrum of folly and limitation.
A painting layered, re-mastered, re-mused and then,
burned by neglect.

Miniature moment of perfection, condensed
to hold a legacy in swirling matter, hard and glittering.
Fractures as long as a walkway
stretching the borders of a great body of water.

Stringing thoughts like a child's dream. I know,
but I've learned not to take synchronicity so seriously,
learned there is only choice, and chance caved into,
selected to stand as fate - the end result, resulting
in a theory of complexities and open systems.

Stuck in the ground, protruding stilted like a statute.
Tell me it is true, that nothing pure is subjected to disease.
Crickets in the late morning.
When I am fixated, it is fantasy, false as poison in soup.
When I am lucid, liquid budding, my fingers are flames,
and all that they contact pulse with their heat.

Various clouds like currents perpetually pumping -
financial lack, and I, myself, curled up on the bottom stair.
Beds I defend, determined to lay in, over and over
hurting for considered crimes. Erasing perimeters, I clutch
at fraudulent mercies, securities of working furnaces
and washed hair. How to love damaged flesh, radiate love
for what is broken, far beyond romanticism, dangerous
as a cockroach and forever mutating -
translucent shells and pores - radioactive
and growing more grotesque under slabs of rotten wood?
Love, I do not understand you as I am older
and keeping up the climb. Medications and
broken down dishwashers.
Debt like ghosts that stick to my aura, smothering out the colour -
Oh weedy garden! Sparrow on my roof, talk to me for a while.
How can I love, middle-aged, half over, clear
of a younger person's hope and indecision?
Pointing at ecstasy (a snail on my forehead) pointing,
pointing, stung.

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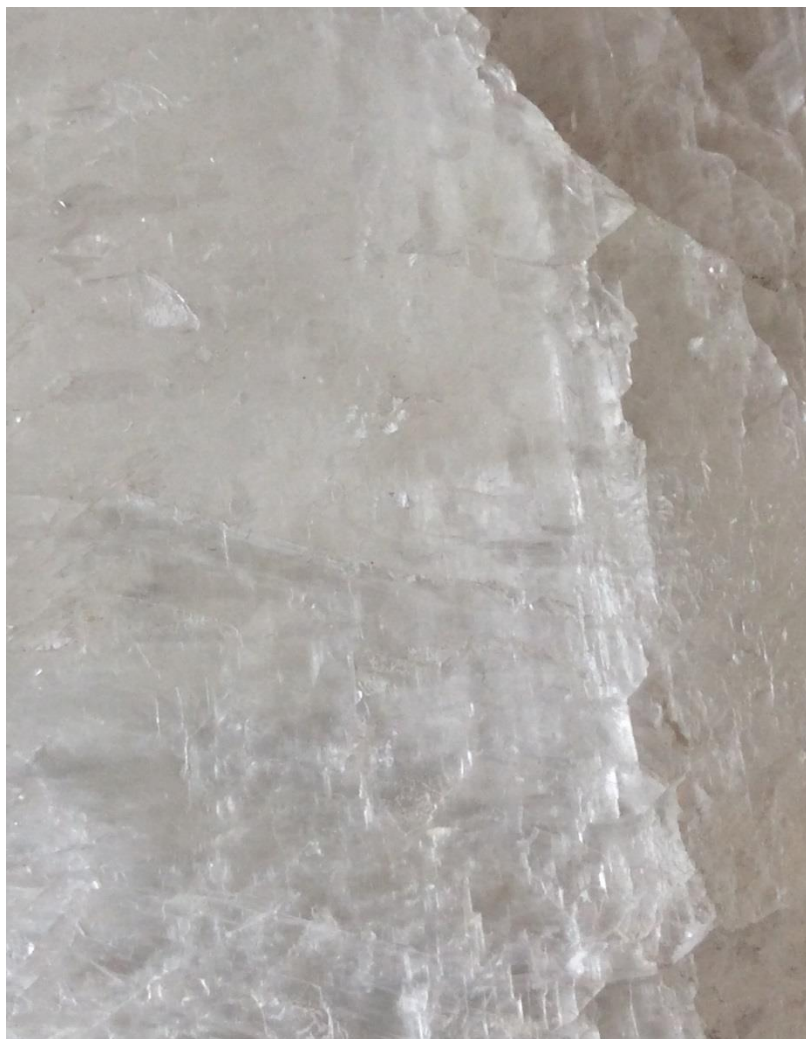


Light that drips down the turnpike, onto roads
and ways far away from any window.
Blocks to build shelters and shields. Flags on flimsy poles.
A neutral breeze busting cardoors and
personalized licence plates.
Paved over, I see a carcass dripping, a little yellow flower,
smaller than a thumbprint.
Rust-coloured shawl, poncho that holds
great sentimental significance holds
me to a memory, old now as a ten-year-old untended garden
or pavement cracks grown into fissures.

Forging, face-like an image. Worm in my sink.
Blood and cup of nutritional joy.
Hold out for the grace of good music
and drying on rocks, nude in the sun.
Quiet heat building up into renewal. Tattered ankle cuffs
and shrinking shadows, mid-stream. Up,
up we go, insistent on making an impression.
But walk lightly is all I'll ever learn, spoon-feeding the children.
I bloom and I will die a woman, a butcher of frivolity
and the natural sequence of things.

**The day is one day - enough, taken
into its rolling waters,
a dog's dream to join in, frolic in
some other species' symbolism.**

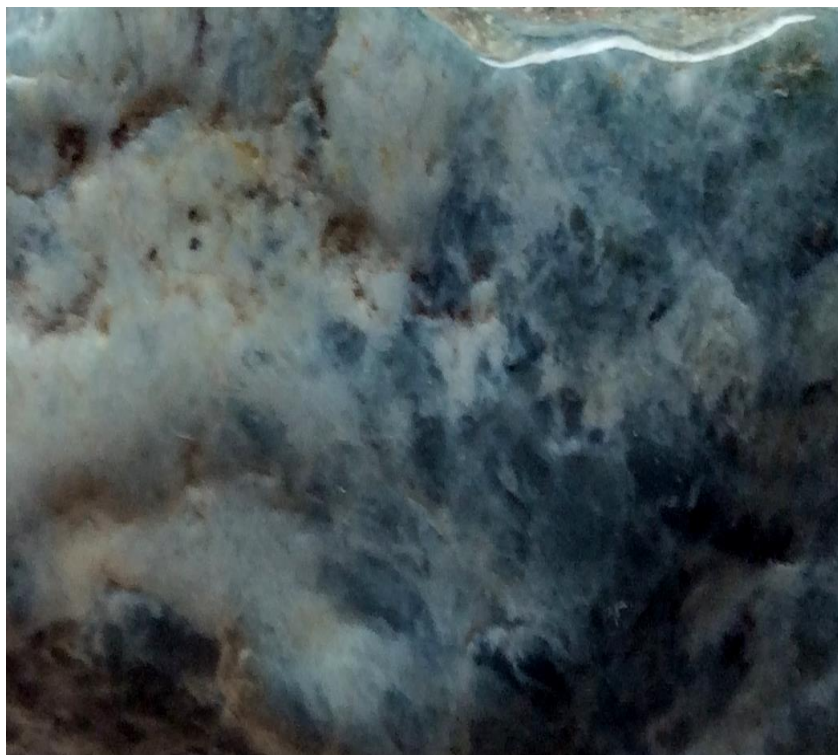
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**Come upon me like a feather-stick -
sectioning my abdomen like a fruit. Suddenly
toddlers are conversing and the grey cat
takes in the morning. Bundle of weeds,
bundle of flowers. An opening
under the burning canopy. Lifetimes spent
collecting synergy, male rhythms and fixed lines.
God is coming down to hide in your loose-change-pocket.
I dreamt of owning your praise. Swinging from the rafters
in a game of hide-and-seek, I sought your breath,
hand of destined chores.**

I played along inside the circle, inside a sack
I could hardly breathe out of. Languishing. A round bruise
forming on my left arm. Place me here. Crown me
or stake me on a tall spike. I am sand thrown mid-air.
No place to collect and land, not even a wave, a bucket,
the forelock of a horse. Not even
thinking in a straight continuation, but there, there, a pebble
between paw pads, then, a minor note locked
in perpetual repetition.

....



Underguard. Crumbled tissue in my mouth.
A crazy way to run - hands in pockets.
Forward without, undeterred by reality.
Plywood I am keeping for emergencies,
for days when putting on the brakes just won't suffice.
Speeding, retreating, torsos twisting beautifully in anticipation.

I used to make mortar by hand, no machine to ease
my impossible labor - brick carrying and scaffolding climbing
and voices that ceased for a while in my head, visions
foiled by exhaustion - overused and folding.

Injuries are bypassed for much larger connections.
Double-winged, it is all that counts, to be counted
like lightening, glazed like tile
and ancient bones kept as keep-sakes,
never a participant in trivial bickering or
watered-downed by petty grievances and

conditioned responses.

Sometimes I think of dying.

I think of the unread newspaper that stays folded,
wrapped in an elastic band.

I think of a broken bird making broken bird sounds,
too broken to be saved, treated by most
as a mild inconvenience

to be walked around and grimaced at.

Except by the man with the warm dark eyes, soft
furrowed brow, and a child who will not forget those mangled
wings or the hard lesson of helplessness, the inability to heal
or to be a vessel for a miracle.

It is hard to love me. I am hard, uncompromising
and never still. I am needing intimacy at every turn,
needing space to brood and build my solitary house.

I miss no one I've lost except the dead - a parent,
many animals that once shared my life. I am not easy, not
easygoing - bloodletting, bloodtesting, phone calls
avoided, coiled, almost mad and never understanding.

Sex and perfect reciprocation. Hands that know more
than words, keeping in the margins, layering synergy energy
into peaks and mounds, like mountains and fractal heartbeats,
fearless of falling, or of clouds. You and I,
it has to be our reward for not selling out, not
building cages of adult-overload, for constantly
clearing room for any divine equation no matter
how it threatens our already-precarious security.

We love our children, but not like others love.

We are less of this place, more reliant on grace
than our own worldly ingenuity to keep food
on the table, the bathroom fixed and cleaned.

Dear Jesus,

are you still mine, and I, yours? It is a lot to take in, decades and
mouldy walls. I am afraid of going off track,
of being dead and seeing there is no more I can do. That
it is done and inerasable. I am afraid of not feeling
the warmth of your hand when I walk, because

you are always holding my hand and I love you
with a personal love like Kierkegaard did -
his hunchback, a deformity that kept him pure.
And the loneliness.

Knowing you, but never any other.

I am not that alone, but I remember
space, lightyears of carved-out quiet. It enters me often
and I cannot get out of it. Breathing becomes separation,
a tool I must remind myself to use.

Remind me again, demand
my unwavering loyalty, trust, and all.

....



Paved paths, brisk
storm of senses, an old
opening, endless as a dug-in arrow -
head in the weeping jungle, the coolness
of autumn air brushing tombstones,
the thin necks of geese.
So much night in a single glass, body
and name together, replacing
existence with this inheritance and no other.
Rows of ships crowding the edge of the lake -
docked and bearing down for winter. The distance
grinds, gravel on my belly, cracked shells
in subterranean pages writing down dawns and victories
never experienced, only imagined.
Is it right to receive the bitter strawberry?
Drink its flesh like juice and
kneel before reality's dictatorship?
Is it clarity? Or forgetting?

...



Escaping on the brook's bank,
banking on nesting warm through
winter, but tears are horns that open
soft spaces, and autumn shifts heat and any hopes
for renewal. Love is fire -
from where it goes there are no shields to block
its scorching. Can we reach bottom in the rain?
Sing hosanna at the mountain's base?

Becoming is the stone, the house, the wave.
The lines between us all are solid, no longer lines but
one heavy blanket of vibrancy, creaking, splitting.

I walk like I walk - barrel beatings,
borrowing crisp notions into my ears.
Stretched for a while to be compact again,
I hear an approaching intrusion, a high
wake, strong enough to travel on.

Stronger days of running through the weeded grass
where rabbits stand still at my passing
and insects move quickly into the shade.
Stranger days of watching a patio stone broken
from a storm - from a fallen tree that fell,
leaving me to find
meaning in such drastic weather.

....



Many years torn - a leaf, a paper towel,
half around the other side, locked
on the beach of my nadir - discipline
and a cold cruel courage, jammed into a groove.
Just the sunlight on my wall,
warming the wall, penetrating the heavy plaster.

I was born from a stem.
I fit on a chalkboard.
Over the cool half-formed moon
I hear an echo, smell the crisp lunar craters -
stagnant rocks, deep troughs to fuel
a million or more Earth dreams.
Scents of dead matter colliding,
of rough stone and endless rotation,
repetitive atmosphere
churning.

Behind a broken bark I hide my vanity,
rushing into quicksand, there I sink.

....



Ladle, ladder

**I lay open under the covers, under
cloaks of heartless yesterdays. My mind
is a string that wraps around the outerscope.
I eat wild flowers, never the lamb,
infused with avoidance, spectacular
acrobats of keeping on, caring little for the outcome.**

**Blundering displays of over-dramatizing
self-aggrandizement revealing the wound
of stunted spiritual development
and crippled attempts at affection.
Round and happy, unstructured indulgences
justified by plump purse strings.**

**Falterings. Mistaken formations.
A perfect line in nature existing.
All the days I felt alone are behind me,
gathering leaves, misty-eyed overlooking
my home: kaleidoscope windows coming into view.**

....



Once, gentle. Now, riled and nowhere but where
the stench of sewage is piled on the curb.
The gears of bitter disappointment snatching
you into a feral hold. Exotic tall weeds,
broken at the base.
Friendships are spoiled at the root, even love is
overshadowed by the decay.
Less obligation, less affection, less loyalty.
I must pretend we are healed, but the only healing
that happened was a cauterization of our severed bond.
There is anger but less hurt,
just the motions of getting through
undetected, and me by myself,
always alone -
separate happenings, entities, isolated
aspects merging, but never
whole. White car on the road.

Red car on the road. Silver then
blue. The only place absolute is
the place I left where faith was unnecessary
and all cells were one cell, not like here -
different functions - each dominated by its own survival.
No wonder love is weakened, can only achieve
a temporary claim on completion.
I accidentally crush the insect with my heel. It is consumed
by another of its kind, carried off
into the hive of practicality -
a gesture void of remorse or sentimentality.
In the end, there is nothing but wires and fences
and frames of flesh, cartilage and senses. Tomorrow
there will be talk and tea and eyes
locked in intense recognition.
Good for the moment
Good until there comes
the something we want
more of, less of, had enough of....

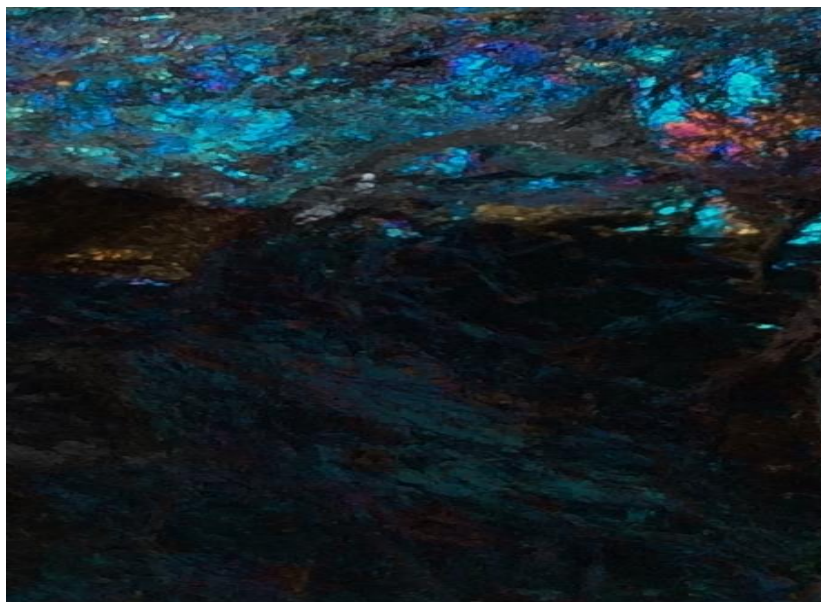
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For a while -
deathcamps, blue balls
baskin'robbins. Play tomorrow
the lute-song of today and remember
the ground-swell
pounding paradise into my brain, collapsing
from overload, reloading fodder
and flighty friendships I've lost use for.
Nothing counts, count on nothing but playfighting
over the bank, over the brim - rim - keeper
of the fixer-upper, of the still fire, fire still
as yellowed corpses. Mid-fall.
Fake it! Love! kindness, tenderness - be
polite, because very little is
anything you want to take with you.
Care-giver, carer of the children,
the laundry, pets and bank account.
It is all you are – rainstorm.

**You must take this stone and swallow,
make peace with your burden, make love
with the swarming emptiness, stuck
in a gravitational pull,
planets, solar systems spinning around you
but you are heavy, must be,
unfazed by the pressured wind - stains
on the ground. Inside of you, chopped-up bits of fate
and crimes conceived before you
were born. Fake it, wallpaper it. Go on, try, smile**

....



Fresh, potted
bright as an angel. Death is a whip
I put down. Ill health slumber,
but God is my mercy-king. Queen
of loving miracles. I will sing to
keep the right intention and grieve
minimally for what I cannot do.
Little red tree, no higher than
a toddler-child. Disco ball,
ball blue and gold,
twirl for me, let the grey dissipate into your
twinkling glow and all my blood into your veins,
little tree
plump and flourishing, readying for greater heights,
string-stream through me, weave me into your branches,
still firmly on the ground.
Angels everywhere I need your temperance. I need
to know my children are protected by your grace,
wing-spread, and even
your cold white eyes.

....



**Gaze, focus, hold.
Unconscious stream
of raw fluidity streaming,
rising over barriers, drowning them
with the pressure of an open door.
Cracks of circumstantial disease,
creating pockmarks to expand destiny's choices,
fashioning gifts to give,**

earned by bomb-droppings
and low flying plane-explosions.
Cobweb parties, graffiti
on the skin of your back,
made with a blade as small and smooth
as the tip of a hawk's feather.
Weaning off the burnt oak,
preening patches of grime.
Wake and rhyme, garden-keeper,
ambush your fear - it cannot be real!
Lungs run the same vibration as a flame.
It is hard, but not impossible. Gulp the sea
of senseless over-warming, pool the salt-taste
in your mouth, feel it
around your lip-rim, the sides of your cheeks. And there,
be safe, joining with the translucent swimmers, floaters
of prehistoric heritage.

....



**Principles of duty
overtaking sleep like a wave.
Heavy love rooted in isolation,
reflecting the depths of true giving.
A condition turns to disease, restrictions
bare down. What is ordinary becomes like
a cage. Children in the drifting storm, drifting
on condensed-traffic streets, how I love you.
How I would do everything I cannot do to ease
the grip of your elephant shackles. Mine was the angel's
autonomy, where nothing was miscellaneous and my bed
was a rich blackness that absorbed all time. Mine was loud
without noise or distraction, just the buoyant sparkle flow
of paired-off stars and the countless debris of ongoing creation.
Mine is yours now, inside less-than-working-organs, kidneys
like puzzle pieces, seamed together by an amateur.**

Where are you now, God-who-remembers, reminds me
of what I once was? My God and Jesus of the lilies,
why the children? Why this fluke,
this bizarre nightmare crawling, closer,
closer than when I had no body, no loves to look after?
And oh I am tired, worn as an old shoe that must keep
the broken glass at bay. Where are you my God, my Jesus?
I know you are here. I know something, but not enough
to deflate my bloating anxiety. It is grief all over again and I
hide myself in older hands, friendless, unsupported, remembering
the wholeness in every flaw, in the universe's veined light
I once travelled on. Remembering that what is flawed sparkles
with a unique variation of beauty, rainbow fractions, infractions
that are blessings that seep and saturate sinews
and bones, galaxies
perpetual, renewable
where everything sings useful -
seemingly incongruent, yet in truth, masterfully
precise.

....



The Clothes We Wear

Currents

The extremities
are beautiful as stained glass, green
as watered grass
and smells that take me over
a river, salted currents,
blooming with the long-bodied
seal, near curved mountain tops,
fresh mist, malleable fog. Humpback
dive. Cold summer winds,
oceans moving in, moving
the Blue whale, the Belugas,
the dark-fined Minkes.

On land, visualizing the underground rooted networks
that create lush densities of forests,
mountain geography, complex geometry

where fungi are conductors of communication
and legacies are passed down,
in spite of fires, droughts,
insect infestations. Places

enchancing children's minds
with tales of fear and heroic
overcoming. Places
to wade in, walk through, hide in
and be exposed.

Huddled in unity,
a river pod in winding ebbs, a family
in sync, mastering the undertows.

I moved like a moon

**in predictable orbit, smashed
by meteors, space pebbles
meeting my surface with deep impact, when
there were dark oceans under my skin, unseen
single forms, coupled forms, and beds of
colourless weeds, but I steadied myself
on the cold shell of repetitive expectations -
dead valleys here, dead heights there.**

**Going through the hard crust, under, into
a thicker atmosphere, currents of heaviness,
breaking barriers better off broken.
Haunted by shapes that come close and rarely touch,
in this weighted environment, by-passing predator
tentacles and jaws by instinct alone, no journey-map,
stars or horizon to act as goal or inspiration, but**

**rolling
through cross-waves with creatures captured
by a dark density like
myself, shaded, loose at the extremities, compact
at the core, thriving on plateaus of deep pressure,
salty flavours all around - so far gone from walking
that legs leave, replaced by fins, and language is not
sound, but a full-body resonance - no delay
between appetite and attainment.**

The means to obliterate

what doldrums dictate
is in the pink sneakers of
winter blues and forcing hope into the mouth
even if it tastes like stale candy.

You pull the waves from a clear sky,
you blur edges into running forms, staining
in effervescent aftershocks.

Help is always available but never ready
to take your hand when you need the courage
not to hang yourself in some avant-garde
symbolic statement on a summit on
a dull metal balcony, hang
like kleenex caught on a high twig.

Comfort comes in packed suitcases and
various dreams of little consequence.

A toddler's game of hide-and-seek
is worth smiling for. Round, rotunda reflected
in the image of a middle-age crew cut and torn jeans.
Inspiration is a wooden ladder, splinters sold
as bargaining chips for each step
to reach nearer to rooftops, treetops and
the sun.

**Your head is in a whisper - booby-traps
revealed in the ridges and dips of your thoughts.
You want to be put in a crockpot and left there,
stirred like soup, leeks and lentils, seeping out
an authentic aroma, arriving home.**

Creativity

Peeled of my own death,
entering a corridor of dawn,
heat without fire,
a staircase into the void,
buried in the gas furnace, this
guest that never comes, eats bread
or slips into the cradle of a comfortable
home. Pen and beauty, an inevitable
loneliness that victory cannot solve,
a transitory opera, bird songs, fragile,
almost breaking, vibrating at a desperate
but soft speed.

A woodland to walk through that inherits
a shadow canopy darkness. Walk through
regardless of doubts full-blown,
regardless of scrapes across your tender surface.
Love is just an image
as you walk,
sounds are menacing but
never reach crescendo,
never sustain the heavier beat that leads
to ecstasy's blackout.

Leaves become teeth.
Impressions are unkind.
Your husk is broken
and your blood is a heap of
dead violets crushed
in a celebrated summer.

A blind theme of sensual deliverance

Opaque but controversial
acts of spiritual courage
visceral
cantankerous

It is equally important
how something is given
as to how, or if, it is received
discarded
avoided

The summer dung is used up.
Flailing or foraging, we all get used up,
turn old and baffled by the complex amount
of disappointment – not just by one
by everyone.

Then it is murky
and mortality-unbelievable
that things will change into childhood's ideal.
A choice emerges, to accept without
bitterness, just do the things
that make you happy - child's play.

For you - that is all it should have to give.
For others?
A shrug to feign indifference
For others
should not be able to give or take inner satisfaction.
Cull the fables

Here it is, the butter slab
on the table
pepper spots on the floor
and marmalade
in doses.

Paired

Hole in the sky we go
through. Other way
around, we exit on the peak.
Oblong mercy is the natural order
of things. We see an innate
camera reciting images
made up of everyone's fluid flames,
discovering everyone's life is short.

I remember sleeping in a dark summer,
remember the innards of the cave I strode into,
making a home out of its
damp walls and dirt.
I never meant to leave that home, never thought
I could find one to hold awareness with such intensity, savoring
the brink-edge depths, even
expanding the boundaries. Never thought to be coupled,
completed in an evolving perfection, never thought
I could find one to give me permission to embody my desires,
discover my desires before I do, then honor the reciprocation
of mutual satisfied longing.

Our bodies become spiritual.
Ourselves, undivided
from the fixed-point and from the no-point
chaos blues. Our gift
is a box of fresh fruit, full
whenever opened - mixed
succulent, surprising pleasures.
Ours is a wholeness that
can be experienced without complications
because we know that death makes God
necessary, and because
we are braver, only capable

when we are where we stood
before our births, each pore
mingled, sensitized, our organs submerged
in the consciousness of this re-joining,
speaking in tongues, with tongues and touch.
The time of only light awakened, then
the time before light
entered, restored.

Balanced Repertoire

Petals and fizzling small craters, inches
from the side of the road.

I dive
into the net and let
the struggle ensue.

I lived in corners
with the dead-mature, in flaps
like wishy-washy by-standers. But here, entering

the small soft mounds of pleasurable
taboos and smiling up in the treetops, I am sitting
on the weakest branch just to get the best overview.

My tongue
is painted many colours.
I lost you in the nuclear glow. It happened
gradually, like a cliff descending,
finally,
meeting ground.

I used to float -
a silhouette of fine cuts
and obvious edges. But I lost you and
it is good to lose extensions,
flavours of redundant delight.

Enthralled by sensual geometry,
by mountain ridges reflected in heartbeats,
wrinkles, rough spots, perfect
intricacy
equilibrium
subconscious sway, and you.

**You never loved me, never knew
I was a neophyte, taker of whatever
I could get, keeper of
an ethereal garden. I**

**will accept my joy
regardless of lack, discover joy
in what droops to provide me canopy, also
in what arches upward, proclaiming its praise.**

Kill the Poet

Kill the poet,
ransack the diet of bliss.
Dust away all traces of inspiration,
childbirth, breath and roses.

Thumbtacks, dried-out bones are
what has stayed.
I am a sand-fish, surfing the bottom,
accumulating
duties, commitments, leftover debris
to feed my already grown children.

Notions of a mission? A nest of delusions obliterated.
Kill the loose ends, dynamite the cave, come
out in the open and say your piece. My bed is
rippled with loose springs, arranging my nightmares
in grand succession. Kill the poet. You killed
my last cup, spilled my endurance, and I am thinking

I will cut my hair cleanly off, clip my eyelashes,
dump all my seeds on stony ground.

Tell me

Tell me what

**is this aberration, this final cut-glass
apparatus? What are you holding me for,
on this earthquaked-ground with madness filling
my ears, with no relief from the quickening, no shortcut
to liberation? What whim am I? Eventual.**

**I am eventual, grounded only by my children and the
animals that pace my floors. I will do a visible
decisive deed if that is what you want or I will
suck in the deadening-pretend, barbaric in its stupidity,
disingenuous in its over-rated kindness. What is left?**

**Tell me, deprive me of government, of natural things
that others have, but tell me what you want me ready
for. Hire me with this particular fruit. Let me be noble,
eliminate my doubt, my fear of being wrong or cruel. Take me
into your music, pound my spirit with your weight and
effort. Tell me what rabid ghost I must put down.**

Help me

put it down.

Doubt

Afterwards, I sit on the altar
of my withdrawal. I will not kneel, rendering
myself a thicker chair. My kind, like
fangs and hooves combined in one secret
creature. A city without history, emotions that
echo but do not deliver. My dress of skin: this place
cannot hold me any longer. Do you see the thumbprint
of the ocean – crater like – in the center of every Earth-rhythm?
Unable to fully believe in Earthy-things and the sun in its
frame of sky, marching on and over – so tired of this
tangle! ongoing. going on. For hopes of a caress, an instant
of locked eyes and the merging of souls. My voice -
weightless as a dream. Desire is a shell, the scent of
cedarwood saturating the pores, memories I haven't
yet encountered. Sweeping is the goal.
And love stays, but how much
is a basket of exotic fruit, and how much more,
imagination?

Within Reach

Within reach – kaleidoscope breaking.
I know what works, the machine is retreating
and each candle has dripped into oblivion.
God's grace is nestled like nectar on my handkerchief,
It drips when it is squeezed but opens wide
when I take delight in its sunset colour.
The phone call I made 13 years ago has
been returned. Someone I dreamed of is
living without hope. That dream is sailing
on a raft into the unpredictable sea. I will sing
though I fear they will stop me. I will sing
though my face is flushed with doubt's
preoccupying disease.
The joy we've been waiting for is coming.
I see it coming, gradual, like all good things.
I will not be afraid.
I will lift up my heart
and make room for what follows...

Trial and Witness

A brilliance on the brim of chaos,
though not close enough to fracture the mind.
Paths of practicality I travel on to be
wholly integrated on this Earth.

Rise up to the wind, release the darts
and heavy hold holding holier than an open nut seed
deep in the ground, reviving, finding its way to the sun.

Shining ice, pulse-energy through fingers,
touching strands of the horizon. Long after
the emptiness, the temperature unbearable,
I followed your face into the smoke in front of the flame.

I couldn't carry on or breathe, was bruised and wearied by
the motion of following and by being grateful.
My limbs were choked from the flow of their blood,
on the sofa, in the shower, unable to find a window,
view of the sky or be a witness.

Sold out to the weeping chill
close to my inner thighs, both sides
weeping disappointment's release.
Long ago I was mixed with my
enemy's soul. That was before
I could articulate my pastlives – the glory
of a bluejay's high-above silhouette.

Before, when my strength saturated the couch
with visible blood-torment, when the glass doors
were always covered and shut and something was emerging
that had substance but not any moons, that
shared a rapport with the isolated prisoner, cut me like I
was an insect wing. I was an insect wing, paper-thin and
flapping, transparent, once capable of carrying a great
load, now cut and useless. I was loathing the
hot summer, hiding from the heat. I am still

dried-up marrow in a porous old bone, deprived for
years of the moisture of blanket-living-flesh. I am still weeping,
waylaid, sold, fishing in a dead zone ocean coral bed,
where not even a minnow can be found,
maneuvering through the still intact
colourful crevices, over
colourful coral mounds.

Another ugly broken shack,
in pieces by the dead grass.
Have I grown used to it yet? Dispelling
the raging urge of a spiritual quest? Have
I loosened my hold, caving in to equal amounts
of cynicism and futility, or can I still
see the open door of DNA delight, riding
the infinity spiral as it drives extinction up
and out of the grave?
By the edge is chaos' court, carrying a fool's tenderness.

I am not worthy of paradise.
I cannot hold out in this jungle (intact) (until) the end.
I cannot be old and on fire, sparkle with deep possibilities.
Living off salted flesh stored away from years of slaughter,
when once consuming a thriving inspiration.
Still in this treehouse of used-up language, I love you most.
In his terrible season while owning someone else's face,
I perform my duties, collect my pie-tins,
loving you most.

Dome the day,
wrap it in a cool cloth significance
the breathing beat surrender
into clear-cutting, weed-tugging
and slippery slime swept-off veranda.
Kiss intensity into my neuron network,
override the sluggish acceptance that
rope-ties a person to a despicable fate,
pathetically hunting coins fallen from the
fat man's purse.
I sing into a seashell. I meditate nude

on my island, undone by small talk so
not allowing room for small talk, small
thoughts or other means of house building,
or Earth-assuring stagnant aspirations.
To be free is to be ruthless, slicing off the head
of any debilitating predicament. To be free is to know
what Jesus knows - that all must be given up to follow
the way of God, to only keep what can be kept pure,
constantly thundering.

The Stain

It seems it has been there forever. But
if I think back, I remember
when it happened - dark, sticky
with a faint repugnant scent,
avoiding it, so as to not soil
my shoes, avoiding because
What was it? Paint or tar?
Whatever it was it was most
probably toxic, not supposed to be there
where children ride their bikes, walk
their scooters, or hold hands with their
dead-pan caregivers or mothers
talking on cellphones,
holding both phone and child's hand
with equal pressure.
I still avoid it like a crusted-over wound turned
to a scar, turned to a permanent deformity.
I have wondered why no one has every cleared
it up, chalk-drew over it,
around it, even the sparrows avoid it and I think
everyone who walks by, walking home or to the subway
pretends not to see it, because it does not belong there -
there with the sidewalk sweepers and garden planters.
It is an aberration - in summer, when
the snow melts, when the snow first falls.

Riverstones

Announcing flesh
in the sleepy-loosened
day. A childhood of
bridges, masterpiece aromas
that overlook the playing fields -
one year, two grades and people
once beautiful, now ordinary,
bike turns, riverstones, skipping
on driveways, melting ice over grates

long pleated hair, dark, looking into
competitive eyes. It was the last
year I was there, spending evenings staring
at the gaudy peeling wallpaper or
in the basement crawlspace, space
without any windows, hearing
hockey games, spiders mating, silhouettes
disintegrating. It was the last time
in that car for that car ride, through dull highway hours,
cats in boxes, on laps, children waving, music at half mast,
children waving.

I have been born

**a thousand times over,
flaked into existence by
force, by will and by desire.
I have had my days
under the siege of physical limitations,
of bloodlines burned and bloodlines
mended. There is no more
time for this rotating scheme,
no space for waiting
or for continuing. I stop here. Unplugging the
flow, breathing only because
I want to, because
this skin that is mine is
the last skin I will ever claim
as the landscapes I drop, drop, then
drop me.**

I can see the sun

but I can't be the sun
or know the sun
in this wilderness clearing
cutting up, suctioning out my insides.
Sing alone over the wide span
of dead rolls, broken by a secret
and wounds dried up, salt hard,
hard with condensed pressure.
Creak and slide over insect glitter, sun
beams shaping the edge of the bank. I am a
fish in a polluted stream. Tires and concrete,
broken blocks blocking my way to the river.
Evolving is hard, takes time to earn a body
that can leap over high obstacles, conquer resisting currents
while starved of a clean home. It takes a fool's joy
and an easy detachment to soar far out of the nest, lift
up and skim the skin of golden warmth. But I am a fish
meant to find shelter at the bottom bed of the ocean,
not in rivers or in streams, not leaping, but slow, slow,
surfing the cold sandy terrain,
skylight forgotten, sunlight undreamed.

When I met an angel she was on a subway car

**Dyed, dull blonde,
roots showing, hunched
over, more than middle age.
No conversation, but
a half smile, a slight nod and
looking affectionately, in my mind saying,
“You should already know
God is here, present when you have no
strength to even ask or search, when both sides
of the tunnel are blocked and the only
way out is up, through loose earth and an inevitable
collapse. God is here, you know,
I am.
How many times do I have to be obvious
to re-kindle your faith?
How many times have I loved you,
drenching you with miracles,
sending you to the depths to find flight,
sending you to a choice of yes or no, so you can
remember
I love you – where trusting me is loving me
is all there is left always to do?”
When I met an angel, she was on a subway car,
temporarily normal - at once
personal, at once divine.**

Crystal dark

sound, woodpecker
foraging, near, nearing
spice
on my fingertips -
relaxed appropriation.
Backpacks and scarcity,
only the Zen flavour
of moving, taking necessities,
giving up newly bought coats
to strangers on buses.
Bus routes going to unexplained territories
vocalizing droning dreams
of the misused, disenfranchised
ruthlessly bored,
cardboard box lifespans
arrows pointing back from the way
you came,
mounds of
silver sorrows, pee-stains
on stones, what is left but dead planets done with
geological formations, never
knowing scattering amoebas, only
knowing failed attempts at rhythm, equilibrium,
rubble,
aftermaths of harsh creation,
pointless rock-globes
spinning
with moons no signs of summer.

Effie

(1967-2014)

Picture at the bottom
tied up in a pit of moths.
The royal crown, life without
a wheel to ride. Paving up the stream
where children once charged down an incline
and jumped into its shallow body.
Instead I am weakened, unable to hold
my breath for more than ten seconds,
lungs, tender with each breath, wounded, flaccid,
but airways enflamed, engrossed with harsh swelling.
Will I die this way? Before my children are fully grown?
Will this be the place, alone, afraid, surrounded by love with
no love able to save me, repair my pulse, give current
enough to dismantle the throne of this disease?
I lay on a bed, under sheets. I know what is tomorrow.
I have no choice
but to let go. My children! My husband! My darling loves!
Winter has not yet come – here, but more like spring
crushing my chest, one breath, one breath, heavy liquid
rising in pockets meant for air – one breath, one breath.
The morning has arrived and death is edging nearer.
I see it waiting
for me on my neighbour's roof, patient, not as a predator,
but more like a sea at ebb tide, gathering moon gravity
and a natural motion of force that will eventually drown
whatever remains on the beachy shores, drowning
before winter - one breath.
My children are on their own as I am and I cannot stop
this freezing, save them from the cliffs
of mountain-burning grief,
prevent them from being orphans in other people's homes,
holding eye contact briefly with other mothers who love
them, feel for them, but never the way I have loved them.
The world will wax me, carry me across
on the path of my heritage.

No one will be alright. Death is never healed,
it is a garment permanently glued, re-shaping the wearer,
taking the light through a black hole,
ending the peace of ignorance.
One breath. The sky has changed.
It is the last time I will bear it witness, from now on -
hospital ceilings, the insides of my eyes
and dreams of purgatorial pain
overcome, of dreaming my children old
with children of their own.
Don't stop dancing, I tell them, don't watch me. I am sorry.
I can barely breathe. Is God real?
I am holding many hands holding mine; whispers,
I love yous, goodbyes.
My last breath escapes me, easier now.
I hear singing, sobbing, singing louder.
I am listening, complete as a stone. My work is over.
My love is burning.
It is a sun. It is the shape of that song.

I will make my way across the water

**I will push my way
through the threshold,
bend over the edge then
let myself go – gravity,
mudslides and rock edges
will dictate my descent, but
I will look up and witness
the starlings amongst the sparrows,
the dislodged grass sprouts that take
the fall with me, above me
in gentle wave-like motions
with the wind.**

**These limbs will crash,
be cut from their flesh, and I will break
only to be reborn, a sapling, myself
graced with lifetimes of memories, stretching
my stem gradually into the light.**

**In time, animals will flourish under
my shaded canopy, and lovers
will carve their initials into my skin,
promising one another their exclusive eternity.**

**I will make my way across the water,
over the threshold and fall
to embrace the ground I came from.**

**Spread low, spread high – a century
or more guardian, a tree-fort reaper in a forest
far across the hill and still
beyond.**

Used blanket

Single rage returning
entrapment pedestal,
busted at the seams.
Empty frame, roofless
walls, poking out of some
hole in the pavement.
Underground gardens flourishing
speaking of dandelions and
tidbits of mercy left
at the wayside to collect
like a tossed-away overcoat -

I wear that overcoat every day,
every evening curled inside of it,
smelling the nuances of the places it has been,
places of music and unrequited love -
beige now and stained dark grey.

I long to regain the taste of its first wear,
when I was the exodus maker,
keeper of the icicle, explorer of a missionary salute,
bowing down only to clean it, sure of
my perfected individuality, saying something
monumental with its sway.

Those were days rich with equal
fear and hope, underneath the canopy trees, looking up,
past cloud ridges and bird flights.

I look at the TV or at nothing, smelling
the stains washed in mild detergent,
with the hope that some scent of back then still lingers,
covering my shoulders, hiding my hands.

Everything that was me, in me, outside of me
is already gone and I am not even 50, still able
to walk, hold a book, a conversation, unable
to return to a place of confidence
wrapped in this faded cloth, overcoat completion.

No Stone No God

I sang a stone, a star
retracting, turning charcoal, still
blood-fire aglow. I pulsed in the aftershock
of entropy, but never believed black
holes to be anything less than the pupils of God,
absorbing light, surrounded by swirling iris-galaxies.
Sucked through the mighty hurricane,
living inside the deepest of organ-flesh,
directing a liberating unfolding – a grand outside
poly-shield, infant-squalling. It is celestial traffic and
it is alive, caught in the mower, twitching, having
the edges shaved off to form a more easily
movable body-round – end-of-summer-stone.

I sang a stone, a star
tuned in to what flows out, seems like cement,
but isn't, is a babbling, bubbling child – wonder
here – wonder at the root.
Limits are the end of all exploring,
the disconnecting, overtaking void, more void,
no food, no stone, no song.

Building Walls of Personal Mercy

It is us without the air -
leverage, no height,
clinging to discipline not
because we fear we will float, but
to stop ourselves from sinking
into the immense dead mire dread, boulevards
of toxic fumes rising
from wastelands, landfill sites gone
under water into our heart-space,
body-space, collapsing.

It is us blind to the fullness of fun,
proclaiming praise on a settled angel's shoulders.
Around a field, running to milk
the burning lungs of their breath,
touch duty with presence of mind, to do service
so curtains don't close like sealing metal sheets,
least moving becomes momentous, then impossible.

Take fruit from the windowsill,
it is our ripeness cradled in the lonely early morning –
prayers, a battle against a threatening tide.

Watch the birds with me,
make peace with the emerging worms.
We know our place, what can save
and what is substitute.

Beauty is

True beauty is an experience of awe, it is a momentary recognition where the interconnectedness of everything becomes clear as it sits on the edge of chaos, of knowing the chaos and the precarious tilt towards it, inside of it, but also knowing that chaos for what it is – an illusion.

It is a transient intimacy with truth, when the layers of life are exposed, revealed in a completed majesty. It is a fleeting experience, a halt in existence that our temporal selves cannot maintain. It arrives unexpectedly, when looking at the face of a child, an old person's hands, an animal's tenderness to another outside of its kind. Or when knowing the starlight patterns, forest root fungal patterns, brain electrical patterns are one in the same patterns, that mountain ridges and heartbeat ridges join in identical rhythms, that what is in the forest is in the branch is in the leaf, and that singing is simply opening up, letting in, then letting out.

Beauty is being in love. It catches our breath, brings peace, uncovering perfect symmetry before dissipating with a thinning intensity. It shields the heart in hope, it is a glimpse of God, is bigger than dying, than death, though denies nothing. It shocks us with a sense of synchronicity, and for a moment, seeing it, we return to the source, restored.

All one child

Long and a lot, fractures of time,
stretching steam-dust through
veins, fissures of luminosity.
Finally able to slice the pie,
embrace my priorities, understand what
sustains the veneer.
Kaleidoscope beating, beeping
a pulsar note of radiant birth, a
lifespan thinning, making new.
Voluptuous decay.

In my mind, complexities are exposed
in synergetic symmetrical beauty, bi-polar displays,
precision across solar systems -
a sidewalk chalk drawing.

Approaching revelation - a reincarnation-past
I am able to re-own without apology, without
demeaning my feminine front.
And up in the stringy multitude infra-ray arms,
vocal as a heartbeat under sinews,
I crack like a seedgnawed by a rodent's teeth,
and then I grow.
Moving
to build ecstasy's garden, grow
a rose – a scent on my neck,
under unshaven arms.

Grow until you own me,
call me out and let be a giant,
let me see the colliding galaxies I came from,
to stamp my name across nebulae,
collecting heat, mass, potency.
Grow until I am formed -
millennium still, erupting

new poem – not a poem

**Block and embrace the energy action,
circular, the fastest stroke of curved precision.
Bend to grow strong and final as a setting sun
seems to be.**

**Above all else, wait for the promise to gain
momentum, height, far from where
the common acceptance will allow.**

**Wait for the baptism, the tenth time around, baptism
into deeper layers of valley rhythms – heaven is in these depths.
Fulfilment and freedom comes better under the weight of
spiritual obligation to God.**

To God:

**I climb close to you. I find you outside
of my lineage, including my walking and my
destination. I know you now as a solid
certainty. I love you though I am still
close to breaking, close to you,
permanently placed on the threshold
where all things begin and all things end.**

Not your taxidermist.

Foreboding,
witnesses cracked,
ice-slit, more than
a broken arm or a lingering smile
that bears no goodwill. Don't bother
with the streamline, take the curve, the twisted route
into the starscape's eye
because it is on that route where the
bells chime a code, where the
simplest solution unfolds
and the wind rises, master of unpredictability,
to thrust you into overload,
where once you were starving for input,
but now are saturated, almost bloated,
still able to breathe a healthy balanced sigh
of mixed astonishment, courage and belief,
still yourself on the threshold collecting
clouds and making a fluctuating ethereal pattern.

From a turret window watch the road - it has arrived,
and glory-be the choices that follow
that will lead to unbreakable intimacy, beyond
engravings etched on sidewalk stone.

It is not like hell

**but like a fathomless void,
hammering wicked
on the civilized heart, emerging
like a great anger out
of each fundamental nerve.**

**It is like failure, like a
cold and ruthless insanity that tugs
aimlessly on the mind's fine fibres.**

**It is like me and I am
prey to the avoided, to the ugly, whirlpool
mouth of isolation, witness to the long
journey through death and need.
I am prey to the contemptuous
dark that gnaws its way under
every freshly formed smile.**

**It is not like innocent pain
but like a tearing or a mutant fear
that piles and piles,
possessing.**

Say good, say goodbye

Bright in the box in the cupboard
where the keepers of conscience and trivia
highjack the pacing depths
to replace it with an easily peeled-off
sheen. It is time to bloom,
to say goodbye to books and playballs of requisitions,
decoding philosophy and revelations in tune
with taking a stance.

Death, I am a robin's feast with
dandelion breath
stalling at the toddler tree
worshipping what is yet to bud.

Death, you made me confused, me,
the revealer of the signs,
mountain-top screamer, fencer for
a fourth-dimensional world.

Flat rocks in a circle, gulls circling
one graveyard, spot
of significant mourning. Faint lines.
But God is solid, exact, without
need of interpretation. Death

is only a layer reached
and removed, when traveled
then traveled through.

Ground Bird Flown

Layers of clear
rainbow shine guide
you through the pyramid portal into
open air revelation.
Joy on a stick, in your soft eyes,
closed in death, with permanent grace.

For all the gifts your gave,
daily miracles, flutterings,
vocalizations, accumulating in song.
For your fragile vessel, energy octave
higher than us wingless dwellers.

Your fearless power streaked
into the lining of your feathered coat,
patterned gold thick veins
washed in sparkling sand.

Beautiful Sage of the flowerbed gardens,
the blueberry, the hempseed swallow,
fearless messenger, angelic power
bound in a small body, you were
loved completely for everything
that you were, gave,
held life force for. You were
soft, demanding and rich
with good humour

stretching, expanding
higher, wider, wings aflame, lifting
in pure vibrant dance, puffed and proud,
your freedom actualized, raised
only inches off the ground.

Calling

It happens once.

**Maybe there are near misses,
little rooms of perfection that were
dressed-up beautifully for a while,
held passion and intent, though behind
the dream-like wonder – a deadness
that surpassed each sermon you gave yourself
of goodwill and future promise.**

**It only happens full strength -
blue flame clean, exact - once. And when
it happens it is warm as a new life force emerging,
tears down confusion, shreds the darkness, and
is difficult like falling in love - a love that overshadows
all other loves before, ruins you for anything less
than its wounding intensity, its golden seriousness.**

**It will not happen again - even if it fails in its performance,
projecting a weak beam across the table. Even if it
straps you to the chair of an unyielding sorrow -
it will not lose its possessive claim.**

**It has latched to your everlasting like a hosanna
riveting through each pore, breaking the bottom
again and again, breaking through the traffic
to measure you naked and
just as you are.**

pure captivity

**Last day under water with
the dragging weight of toe-the-line.
I taught myself the art of manifesting
a carry-on bag full from the hunt.
Days drifting on the sandbox dunes,
gleaming but never fresh as a horizon,
snatched from my mountain onto
a foreign homeland.
Limbo dives into infertile meeting rooms,
tables as round as King Arthur's invention, but no knights
are these, only sagging eager pretenders, saying 'fun!'
when meaning
"O hell, this is a hell-of-a-climb!"
I know my magic, the hand I was dealt and have
learned to never underestimate a leap of faith.
I trust my God – already bright and joyfully burning.
A sword is harmony. I can't think of a way
but around me is between me, and I am
swept of my burdens and my prisoners, trusting
to be clothed, this sacred baptism
into surf-riding the foaming plateaus of the tenuous
and difficult-breathing realms
unexplained.**

The Clothes We Wear

Fall down and recognize
the river and its reaching sway.
Solitarily suited between what you gave
and what was refused reception.

Born on a balcony, hung over the rails -
so much work, so much love needed to
make it work. And then you grew up
and needed only a dark room to hide in,
the reproach of some sages and
the occasional charity.

Then your fire-ball bouquet of demands,
squealing and giggles drew blood and the rain
got stuck in the sky as the angels misplaced
your destiny. They cannot get it back –
some have tried, most have not even bothered
as it was fed into the ocean, swallowed up
by primordial beings, ancient, not used
to sunlight and heaven.

They swim through pressurized underwater caverns,
carry it stuck in their gullets, only to be released
when their centuries-old bodies give way to compost. Then
maybe a holy voice will hear it cry out, bubble to the surface
and claim its place back inside of you. Maybe, in that time
you will give value to the hallelujah
that fireworked through you when you first came here –
from another place, high up, but strange and dark too
as the ocean's floor.

About the Author



Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,125 poems published in more than 450 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcupine Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group). She is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay; www.allisongrayhurst.com

All these poems have been published and have appeared in:
 Parabola, issue Alone & Together; Elephant Journal; The
 Antigone Review; Drunk Monkeys; Buddhist Poetry Review;
 Literary Orphans; The Brooklyn Voice; The American Aesthetic;
 New Binary Press Anthology; The Foliate Oak Literary
 Magazine; The Cape Rock; The Blue Fifth Review; Coe Review;
 Synchronized Chaos; The Peregrine Muse; Existere; Envoi;
 Creative Talents Unleashed; Written In The Skin - an Insomniac
 Press anthology; The Bees Are Dead; Social Justice Poetry;
 Journal of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry; Poetry
 Halifax Dartmouth; Spillwords Press; JVC Poetry Newsletter;
 Sacred Chickens; Keep Poems Alive; Drift; Wascana Review;
 Reflections; The Affiliate; White Wall Review; The Seventh
 Quarry; ken*again; Smashed Cake Review (Sidereal Journal);
 Poetry Nottingham International; Mother of Thyme; B-Gina
 Review; Writer's Lifeline; Skaz; A Joyful Noise; Jones Ave.; Oh!
 Magazine; Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice; PoetryMagazine;
 Gossamer Poetry; Message in a Bottle Poetry Magazine; The Blue
 Hour; UC Review; Duane's PoeTree; Chicago Record Magazine;
 Exile; Indie Poets Indeed; Nazar Look; Boston Poetry Magazine;
 Snapping Twig; VerseWrights; ink sweat and tears; CRASH a
 litzone; Lit Up Magazine; The Stray Branch; Novelmasters; The
 Poet Community; Black Mirror Magazine; Turk's Head Review;
 Ann Arbor Review; The Poetry Jar; Subprimal Poetry Art;
 Mount Parable Poetry Forum; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; Full
 of Crow; Peedeel's Blog; Bursting Plethora of Rainbow Colors;
 Veil - Journal of Darker Musings; The Muse - An International
 Journal of Poetry; The Artistic Muse; Literature Today; Daily
 Love; Out of Our; Nostrovia! Milk and Honey Siren poetry
 anthology; Leaves of Ink; October Hill Magazine; The Screech
 Owl; Crisis Chronicles; The Camel Saloon; The Write Room;
 Storm Cellar; Anchor & Plume: Kindred; Poetry Pacific; Torrid
 Literature - Erosion Anthology; Extract(s); The Greensilk
 Journal; Torrid Literature - Evolution Anthology; The Blind Vigil
 Revue; Jellyfish Whispers; Pirene's Fountain; Studio Journal;
 Writers Haven - Verse Land; Wilderness House Literary Review;
 Dead Snakes; Tangerine Heart Poetry Zine; The Syzygy Poetry
 Journal; cur.ren.cy; Dali's Lovechild; The Continuist; Subliminal
 Interiors; The Bijou Poetry Review; Crack the Spine;
 Carcinogenic Poetry; Kritya; Iron Gall Press; Agave Magazine;
 Guwahatian; Oddball Magazine!; South Florida Arts Journal; Aji

Magazine; Bewildering Stories; The Galway Review; Straylight Literary Magazine; Torrid Literature Journal, Volume XV; Cahaba River Literary Journal; The Bitchin' Kitsch; Kalkion; Fine Flu Journal; Peacock Journal; Gris-Gris; Jumping Blue Gods; Fat City Review; Decades Review; Nomad's Choir Poetry Journal; blackmail press; Section 8 Magazine; Pulsar Poetry Webzine; Far Enough East; Inscribed Museum Literary Zine; poeticdiversity: the litzine of Los Angeles; Both Sides Now; Abramelin; The Entroper; Bigger Stones; Blue Lake Review; The Kitchen Poet; The Weary Blues; Triage Monthly; Occulum; SpinRock Reader Lit Forum; Kind of a Hurricane Press; Scars Publications; above/ground press; Whisper; Jotter United Lit-zine; Tic Toc poetry anthology; The Tophat Raven; Misfits Miscellany; Ayris; InnerChildPress; Split Lip Magazine; Bare Hands Poetry; Pocket Thoughts; Rusted Rose Poetry Forum; The Mind(less) Muse; Indiana Voice Journal; Viral Cat; Calliope Magazine; Napalm and Novocain; Wax Poetry and Art Magazine; The Furious Gazelle; Contemporary Poetry - an Anthology of Present Day Best Poems; Change Seven Magazine; River Poets Journal; Sentinel Literary Quarterly; See Spot Run Literary Magazine; Pyrokinecton; Storm Cycle 2013 anthology; Art Villa; Ikleftiko Poetry Journal; Down in the Dirt anthology; Sunlight in the Sanctuary anthology; the Intersection anthology; Dog Is Wearing Pants Literary Page; hello goodbye - goodbye hello anthology; Gutter Eloquence Magazine; BareBack Magazine; The Writers Newsletter; Long Story Short; Random Poem Tree; The Literary Nest; Anti-Heroine Chic Magazine; Poetry Life & Times; Prachya Review; Think Pink; JD DeHart - Reading and Literature Resources; The Blue Mountain Review; Profiles in Poetry Literary Zine; The Otter; WritingRaw; Outlaw Poetry; Setu; Ink In Thirds; Zaira Journal

Nominations/Awards:

- 'The Passage of Arnik' was nominated for "Best of the Net" 2017 by Synchronized Chaos.
- 'Crystal Dark' was nominated for "Best of the Net" 2015 by Indiana Voice Journal.
- 'The Path Before' was nominated for "Best of the Net" 2015 by Juxtaprose Literary Magazine.
- 'Where I Stand' was nominated for "Best of the Net" 2015 by Juxtaprose Literary Magazine.
- 'Childhood Cracked' won "The 2011 Mariner Award for Short Poetry" 2011 by Bewildering Stories.

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“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” *Kyp Harness*, singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of *Wigford Rememberies*, Nightwood Editions; www.kypHarness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity's authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” *Taylor Jane Green BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology and The Rise of Eros.*

“Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst.” - *Blaise Wigglesworth*, *Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice.*

“Grayhurst’s poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original,” Beach Holme Publishers.

“Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born,” *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt*, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis*, poet, novelist and educator.

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,” *Cristina Deptula*, editor of Synchronized Chaos.

**“River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst”
By Diane Barbarash**

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight poems from this collection into songs, creating a full album. “River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst” is to be released October 2017.

The poems used for the album can be read here:

River – page 186

Now I am Two – page 169

Animal Sanctuary – page 45

Beyond the Grave – page 72

Girl – page 77

Seamless – page 189

You Are – page 44

elegy of this day being – page 47

SIGHT AT ZERO **- selected poems (1988 to 2017)**

"Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original," Beach Holme Publishers.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes," Cristina Deptula, editor of Synchronized Chaos.



"When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her poems leave me breathless, shaken. They are both beautiful and difficult to behold," Anna Mark, poet.

Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Four times nominated for "Best of the Net", 2015/2017, she has over 1125 poems published in over 450 international journals and anthologies. She has 21 published books of poetry, six collections and six chapbooks. She lives in Toronto with her family. She is a vegan. She also sculpts, working with clay.



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